



## **Shared Governance and Leadership in African Universities: Experiences from Mzuzu University, Malawi, and Amoud University, Somaliland**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the application of shared governance structure and leadership styles in African Universities, specifically at Mzuzu university in Malawi and Amoud University in Somaliland. First, a brief background about Mzuzu and Amoud Universities, and their governance structure will be presented. This is followed with the description and analysis of data on teamwork, job satisfaction, shared decision-making at Mzuzu and Amoud universities. Finally, this paper will provide recommendations for African universities who are faced with similar problems of shared governance with valuable data regarding governance and leadership, and provide information about the ways in which universities governance can be modified to increase the success of higher education institutions.

### **Résumé**

Cet article porte sur l'application de la structure et du mode de gestion caractéristiques de la gouvernance partagée, dans les universités africaines, particulièrement à l'université Mzuzu du Malawi et à l'université Amud, dans le Somali land. Nous commençons par une brève description des universités Mzuzu et Amoud et de leur structure de gouvernance. Nous enchaînons en suite avec la description et l'analyse de diverses données relatives au travail d'équipe et à la prise de décision partagée au sein de ces deux universités. Pour finir, cette contribution fournit des recommandations aux universités africaines confrontées aux mêmes problèmes liés à la gouvernance partagée, sur la base d'informations pertinentes concernant la gouvernance et la direction. Cet article fournit également des informations sur les éventuels changements à apporter à la gouvernance universitaire, de sorte à augmenter les chances de réussite des institutions d'enseignement supérieur.

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## **Introduction**

For America, governance in higher education has involved those in authority, power and influence (Hines 2000). Five themes have been extensively explored in studies on governance: multiple claimants to authority; a continuum from participatory governance to a corporate style of governance; the significance of policy actors external to the campus; locus of authority; and higher education as a major instrument of state policy (Hines 2000:105-106). Governance is a term which was coined by Corson in the 1960s to show separation of decisions about academic or faculty matters from issues of institutional concern. By the 1970s, faculty authority in American universities was established over curricula, faculty status, instruction, research and student performance (Duryea 1973; Baldrige et al 1977). This was differentiated from institutional or communal authority for finance, public relations, physical plant, alumni and student affairs. Stewart (1976) labeled these as 'associational or collegial' as differentiated from 'executive or hierarchical'. Corson had recommended that colleges and universities need restructuring to establish the sense of community that was lost in the 1950s and 1960s. It was argued that faculty's primary authority needed reaffirming. The 1960s student uprisings resulted in student participation in campus governance. Power and influence of faculty also increased (Hodgkinson 1971). This was a significant change for the universities. Reasons that have been put forward for this change include the fact that trustees and governing board members relinquished some of their decision making prerogatives to faculty and campus administrators (McConnell 1970). There was also greater involvement in governance of agencies external to colleges and universities. In short, higher education governance in America has increased levels of involvement by the stakeholders, has promoted a spirit of cooperation between governing boards and major participants and has given recognition to the fact that problems of higher education can be solved by collaborative initiatives and not by competition among stakeholders or centralised mechanisms.

On the other hand, governance structures across Sub-Saharan Africa are derived from the institutional models established by former colonial administrators although they have been modified to suit the various cultural and political philosophies. In Anglophone African countries like Malawi and Somaliland, universities are statutory organisations created by an Act of Parliament. Responsibility for institutional policy decisions rests with a university council whose members are appointed by the Head of State. The university senate is responsible for academic affairs and teaching is organised through faculties, departments and specialised schools or institutes. The Head of State is also the chancellor (President) of the university. This was originally

meant to emphasise the importance of the role of the university in national development. But, in reality, it has served to exacerbate tensions between universities and the state. State control has been rigid hence hindering developmental initiatives of the universities (Saint 1992:72). Centralised governance has also stifled and impinged on academic aspects like research and teaching. It has been argued in the literature (Banya and Elu 1997; Neizer 1998; World Bank 1988; Court 1991; Goma 1989) that greater decentralisation in higher education systems in Africa would bring more efficiency. However, effective decentralisation requires an explicit definition of the roles of the constituencies at various levels and the effective exchange of information between them. Effective governance can provide the stability necessary for the institutional development of African universities (Saint 1992:72). This would also need a sound and effective leadership. It would require a vice chancellor/president who is willing to work with teams and collaborate with others; a vice chancellor/president who is prepared to listen and establish a pattern of cooperation between all stakeholders. It would need a transformational leader. African leadership in universities since their establishment in the 1960s has mostly been transactional. This has been because of the pressure on the universities to produce immediate results. Politicians had urged universities to teach, advance knowledge through research, have academic standards, help unify Africa, produce doctors, lawyers, teachers and so on. The university leaders and their followers were supposed to do all these within a short time as the expatriates were leaving Africa. It therefore became a matter of 'rewards for work done or punishment if not done'. Such transactional leadership styles have lived their lifespan in Africa and universities need to follow what some of the best institutions in the world have done in transforming their institutions, but they should also be conscious of their own environmental changes and needs. They should take into consideration the fact that certain aspects of shared governance may not work in Africa. The aim should be to develop universities that have their own African identity. For America, shared governance has been the trump card for its success story in the higher education in addition to other aspects like open success, autonomous control, wide collaboration and so on. The transparency, representative participation, information flow and shared responsibility would help Mzuzu and Amud universities as well.

This paper discusses the need for changes in governance and leadership styles to suit the current needs which have gone beyond transactional and centralised/hierarchical modes of managing university education. Mzuzu University of Malawi and Amud University of Somaliland will serve as case studies to shed light on the governance structures in African Universities. First, a brief background about Mzuzu and Amud Universities, and their

governance is presented. This is followed by a description and analysis of data on teamwork, job satisfaction, shared decision-making at Mzuzu and Amoud universities. Finally, the study provides recommendations for African universities which are faced with similar problems of shared governance with valuable data regarding governance and leadership, and perhaps contribute to the discussions on the measures of accountability, organisational culture, faculty autonomy, sound leadership, and provide information about the ways in which universities governance can be modified to increase the success of higher education institutions.

### **Background information on Mzuzu University**

Mzuzu University was established by an Act of Parliament as a second university in Malawi. Besides establishing the University, the Act provided for the institution's conduct and management, the incorporation of the university council as a body corporate and as a governing body of the university, and the establishment of a senate (Mzuzu University Act 1997). The University's Mission is to promote high quality education, training, research and complementary services to meet the technological, social and economic needs of individuals and communities in Malawi. The objectives include:

- To advance knowledge and promote wisdom and understanding by engaging in teaching, research and training by making provision for the dissemination of learning.
- To engage in such university education, research and training as is responsive to the needs of Malawi, Africa and the world.
- To offer an education of high university standards and
- To provide complementary services to meet the technological, social and economic needs of individuals and communities (Act 1997).

These objectives reflect the country's national developmental goals as stated in the Malawi Development Policies (MDEVPOL).

### **Governance and structure at Mzuzu University**

The university is a quasi-statutory organisation created by an Act of Parliament as noted earlier. Responsibility for institutional policy decisions rests with the Mzuzu University Council whose membership is determined by the government and the University community. At the planning stage of the university's establishment, the intention was to have an autonomous institution with its own administrative structure different from the one that existed in its sister university which had been established earlier. The planners had argued that such a structure would enable the university to make a fresh start and

thereby avoid some of the problems existing in the university of Malawi. The planners also wanted to have the new university in a position to be able to compete in the current changing environment and encourage excellence. This competitiveness would also, in the course of time, contribute to the advancement of the institution. For the first time, students going to the university would pay for tuition although it was a public university. Previously, university education in Malawi was free of charge. The government shouldered all the financial responsibilities—tuition, accommodation, books, food, transport to and from the university and so on. The students even received allowances for incidentals. It is a well known story how this has created problems for universities in Africa. Mzuzu University was going to be different. It was going to ask students to contribute to their higher education.

Planners also envisioned a collaborative/participatory structure of governance. This was shown even in the initial stages when consultations were underway. The community was consulted on various issues. The institution's status, location, name, funding modes and programmes to be offered were all decided upon after wide consultations. This collaborative and participatory style was evident even after the institution was established.

### **Key academic decision points: Governance patterns at National University of Somalia (NUS)**

The National University of Somaliland was administered by the Ministry of Higher Education. Since the Somali government was the major benefactor of the 'product' of higher education, as well as the major source of its capital, it had considerable clout with regard to university management, including its administration, scholarship programme, and faculty research. In fact, the head of the state (former dictator Siad Barre) was also chancellor of the university, even though his duties were mainly ceremonial in nature (Bullaleh 1993; Nur-Awaleh 2003; Mebrahtu 1992:632).

The rector was the chief executive officer of NUS, assisted by two vice-rectors who were responsible for academic affairs and administrative affairs, respectively. Both the rector and the vice-rectors were appointed by the National Ruling Party (Mebrahtu 1992:632).

NUS had two other main administrative bodies in the university: the university council and senate. The chair of the council is the Minister of Higher Education. The ruling political party, unlike the student body, had its own representative on the council. The senate committee was chaired by the rector and included two academic staff members (selected by their deans). The academic staff in each faculty was responsible for designing and implementing the student curriculum (IEES 1989). Each faculty was headed

by a dean who acted as its chief academic and administrative officer. The dean, who reported to the vice-rector and rector, led the faculty in designing regulation for research, admissions, registration, and examination of students (Mebrahtu 1992:633).

During Siad Barre's regime (1969–1990), institutions of higher learning in Somalia had less autonomy, making them dependent on the government. The government's involvement in higher education came in the form of subsidies, especially free tuition for students. The government's arguments for free education centred around the assumption that society would derive social and cultural advantages because education would provide opportunities for economic and social integration of marginalised groups and individuals (World Bank 1988; IEES 1984). Proponents of these views argued that the analysis of the rate of return on education was inadequate. They also put forth another provocative argument: If the government could subsidise the tobacco industry, why not subsidise higher education? (Samoff 1993:182).

### **Current status of higher education in Somalia/Somaliland**

A major devastating impact of the civil war in Somalia was the destruction of the National University of Somaliland (SNU) and other institutions that offered post-secondary education. Before the collapse of the Somali state, NUS enrolled 4,650 students, and consisted of thirteen faculties: law, economics, agriculture, education, medicine, industrial chemistry, languages, engineering, journalism, geology, veterinary, and political science (International Handbook of Universities 1993). Journalist William Finnegan's description of NUS, especially the former College of Education, in 1995 is telling:

The low-rise, modern looking building of the former College of Education is now a displaced persons' camp. The classrooms and dormitories were full of families; the walls were blacked by cooking fires... the library was a world of dust. Books were piled everywhere, on sagging shelves, on toppling heaps. Some were stained and disintegrating, but most were in tact... A cow moored somewhere. The dust was so deep that it was though the desert itself was creeping through the walls, burying the books in fine sand (Finnegan 1995:76).

Despite this bleak picture, the impact of genuine efforts to rehabilitate many learning centres by Somalis and local and international nongovernmental organisations is amazing. For example, in Somaliland (former British Somaliland), the stable political environment that has prevailed for the past decade has facilitated genuine efforts to rebuild and rehabilitate the majority of the schools (Nur-Awaleh 2003).

Higher Education in Somaliland consists chiefly of Amoud University (AU) and Hargeisa University (HU). AU is located at the former secondary

school campus at Amoud in the Awdal region of Borama (the largest city in Awdal), while HU is located in the capital of the Somaliland Republic, Hargeisa (Nur-Awaleh 2003).

Like other regions in Somaliland, students in the region of Awdal and other regions in Somaliland never had access to an institution of higher learning in their own backyard. Students who graduated from the former Amoud Secondary School and other schools in the region had to travel to Mogadishu for higher education. The chair of Borama's Board of Directors articulated the dilemma of higher education in Somaliland well:

All the colleges and faculties of the Somali National University were located in Mogadishu and its vicinities and this obviously provided... the students in the capital an opportunity for higher education that was denied to their counterparts in other regions... No attempt was made by the former government to remedy this obvious disparity in higher education between the North and South... It was sad to recall that during this period it was taken for granted that higher education was strictly the privilege of the South and any suggestion of its expansion to the North (Somaliland) was interpreted as a political sin (Elmi 2000:2).

### **Amoud University (Somaliland)**

The rebirth of the Republic of Somaliland, and the prolonged peace and prosperity experienced by this young nation, necessitated the establishment of Amoud University (AU) in Somaliland. The civil war not only destroyed the economic and social fabric of the society; it also created a bleak future for thousands of Somaliland's youth, who faced a devastated educational system, a lack of opportunity for higher education, and high unemployment. Hence, some have argued that 'Amoud University is perhaps the most powerful tool that could offer a sense of direction to the hopeless and unemployed youth' (Elmi 2000:2).

At present, there are data correlating educational facilities to pertinent social development needs. There is an urgent need for higher learning to meet these needs and to put education at the service of the people. The Somali Diaspora constitutes a severe brain drain from Somaliland, which is already suffering from shortages in technical and professional expertise (Nur-Awaleh 2003). The main justifications given by many Somalians for leaving the country is to pursue education, particularly higher education, for their children. A national university at home would therefore help to attract many overseas Somalians back home and at the same time retain more who are already here (Elmi 2000:2).

AU has two departments, Business and Education. According to Samatar (2001:650), University administrators 'selected education as foundational

discipline due to the country's dire need for qualified schools teachers'. The community and the administration intend to revise an old Somali education tradition in which all university graduates expected to obtain positions in government. By contrast it is hoped that those majoring in business administration will secure employment in established enterprises or create their own business (Nur-Awaleh 2003).

### **Governance Structure of Amoud University (AU)**

Unlike the former National University of Somaliland (NUS), AU is very autonomous and has a very limited relationship with the Ministry of Higher Education in Somaliland. This administrative structure consists of the Supreme Council, the Scientific Council, the president, three vice-presidents, four deans, three directors, a head librarian, and a head of technological support (Nur-Awaleh 2003).

The Supreme Council oversees financial and administrative management, while the president is the chief academic and administrative head of the university and is responsible for its day-to-day operation. Three vice-presidents, one for academic and student affairs, another for planning and registration, and another for external affairs, support the president. At each college level, the dean is the chief academic and administrative head and is responsible to the vice-president for maintaining and promoting efficient management of the college. Within colleges, faculties or centers act in instruction. Faculties are made up of various departments divided among various academic disciplines. Departments are in charge of teaching, curriculum development, and student evaluation and assessment (Nur-Awaleh 2003).

The data on the number of instructional faculty at AU show that there were only twelve faculty members for the academic year 1999–2000. The entire university has only one female faculty member. No data are available on the full-time or part-time status, rank, age, and level of education of AU faculty (Nur-Awaleh 2003).

A total of 103 students enrolled in AU in the 1999–2000 academic year, of whom fifteen were female. Based upon a comparison with student-to-teacher ratios in higher education in Africa, AU is not fully utilising its faculty and staff. But the present student-to-staff ratios could be defended as a transitional phenomenon. Of AU students, 71 percent are from the Awdal region. AU has had little success in offsetting the disparities in access to the university for potential students who are not from the Awdal region (Nur-Awaleh 2003).

A major problem at Somaliland universities is the issue of the brain drain which has been devastating to higher education and research in Somalia/Somaliland. As a result of the civil war, poor training and facilities, high centralisation of power, limited job and promotional opportunities, decades



of poorly designed structural programmes, poor working conditions, and decades of abuse by the former dictator of Somalia (Siad Barre), the finest and brightest minds in the fields of sciences, higher education, law, engineering, architecture, medicine, educational management and planning, business and public administration, political science, and history have moved abroad, leaving behind an already debilitated system of higher education (Nur-Awaleh 2003).

The University of Amoud has serious difficulties in recruiting and retaining Somali faculty members. The continuous economic hardship faced by Somalia/Somaliland is manifested in an unattractive reward system in the universities. The salaries of professors are so low that it is very difficult to recruit new personnel. The few dedicated and committed faculty who have decided to confront these challenges are faced with a dilemma of whether to pay total attention to instruction and research or divide their attention between teaching and some other private money-generating activities that will help them sustain themselves and their families. Hence, higher education in Somalia/Somaliland is bound to continuously face a downward spiral until the nation's political economy is overhauled (Carrington and Detragiache 1999; Saint 1992; Abdulla 1996).

### **Conceptual framework**

The following research questions guided this study as it relates Mzuzu and Amoud Universities:

1. To what extent does a good working environment contribute to job satisfaction of faculty and staff at Mzuzu and Amoud Universities?
2. What is the relationship between teamwork, job satisfaction and administrative styles that exist at the Mzuzu and Amoud Universities?
3. For effective participation, leadership needs to ensure that constituencies work in teams (Bensimon and Neuman 1993). Do such teams exist at the university?
4. How innovative is the organisational culture of the university?

The above questions have been formulated taking into consideration the theory that the effectiveness of a university depends on the specified outcomes in goal achievement. This in turn depends on the governance structure and leadership of the organisation. Blake and Mouton's Management Grid Theory is considered for adaptation to Sub-Saharan African universities where outcomes are closely tied to national educational goals. Their achievement depends on the relationship of various variables affecting performance of individuals involved. These include: team work, innovative culture, healthy work environment, job satisfaction, and shared governance structure.

### Methods and sample

To begin to fill the gap of our knowledge of shared governance, a simple random sample of 50 faculty and staff from Mzuzu university and 12 faculty and staff from Amoud University was selected. A Likert scale survey was given to them. Seven percent of faculty and staff at Mzuzu previously worked in the university of Malawi. The survey was constructed around four independent variables (work environment, job satisfaction, team work, and organisational culture). The survey asked the faculty and staff views on their institution's structure and leadership, job satisfaction, collaboration and shared decision-making, organisational climate and communication. All items were self-reports of attitudes and behaviors that were measured using a 5- point Likert scale ranging from 1 = neutral, 2 = agree, 3 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. In order to show the effect of the variables on faculty and staff perceptions about shared governance at Mzuzu university, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Pearson r correlations were made for each of the variables.

**Table 1: Variables and Number of Responses per category of Mzuzu University**

| <b>1.Work environment independent variables</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Strongly agree</b> |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Helping the university                          | 8                        | 15              | 15           | 1                     |
| Access to management                            | 3                        | 16              | 18           | 3                     |
| Flexible policies and structure                 | 8                        | 7               | 17           | 4                     |
| Commitment to individual development            | 6                        | 14              | 15           | 1                     |
| Improvement of the system                       | 6                        | 23              | 7            | 2                     |
| Innovativeness                                  | 0                        | 6               | 23           | 6                     |
| Satisfactory management                         | 4                        | 22              | 7            | 0                     |
| Motivation for good performance                 | 5                        | 26              | 9            | 2                     |
| Participation in decision making                | 3                        | 18              | 14           | 2                     |
| Ethical standards                               | 3                        | 25              | 6            | 0                     |
| <b>2. Job Satisfaction</b>                      |                          |                 |              |                       |
| Rewarding skills                                | 6                        | 20              | 11           | 2                     |
| Fair wages                                      | 10                       | 21              | 8            | 0                     |
| Autonomy at work                                | 3                        | 7               | 16           | 13                    |
| Satisfactory work outcomes                      | 2                        | 7               | 20           | 10                    |
| High motivation                                 | 2                        | 6               | 22           | 8                     |

**3. Team work**

|                                       |    |    |    |    |
|---------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| Communication                         | 2  | 24 | 8  | 4  |
| Rewards for team work                 | 2  | 15 | 14 | 8  |
| Harmony                               | 11 | 19 | 13 | 3  |
| Self directed teams                   | 11 | 13 | 13 | 8  |
| Influence on performance ratings      | 0  | 25 | 8  | 5  |
| Free and Open discussions             | 11 | 11 | 10 | 14 |
| Full participation in decision making | 0  | 6  | 13 | 18 |
| Adequate communication from leaders   | 0  | 2  | 33 | 15 |
| Discussions are encouraged            | 22 | 12 | 5  | 2  |
| Shared decision making                | 12 | 10 | 9  | 5  |

**4. Organizational Culture**

|  |    |    |    |    |
|--|----|----|----|----|
| Innovativeness                           | 3  | 4  | 22 | 8  |
| Knowing the vision of the university     | 16 | 15 | 7  | 0  |
| Involvement in creation of a new culture | 5  | 17 | 9  | 2  |
| Collaboration                            | 6  | 11 | 13 | 2  |
| Involvement in decision making           | 15 | 19 | 5  | 0  |
| University competitiveness               | 4  | 8  | 15 | 4  |
| Risk tolerant                            | 14 | 18 | 4  | 12 |
| Outcomes are achieved sometimes          | 2  | 5  | 15 | 6  |
| Outcomes are always achieved             | 9  | 8  | 12 | 3  |
| Outcomes are never achieved              | 7  | 20 | 4  | 0  |

**Table one Variables and Number of Responses per Category of Amoud University**

| <b>1.Work environment independent variables</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Strongly agree</b> |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Access to management                            | 0                        | 1               | 1            | 4                     |
| Flexible policies and structure                 | 0                        | 1               | 2            | 3                     |
| Commitment to individual development            | 0                        | 0               | 6            | 0                     |
| Improvement of the system                       | 0                        | 0               | 5            | 1                     |
| Innovativeness                                  | 0                        | 0               | 1            | 5                     |
| Satisfactory management                         | 0                        | 0               | 2            | 4                     |
| Motivation for good performance                 | 0                        | 0               | 5            | 1                     |

| <b>1. Work environment independent variables</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Strongly agree</b> |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Participation in decision making                 | 0                        | 1               | 5            | 0                     |
| Ethical standards                                | 0                        | 0               | 6            | 0                     |
| <b>2. Job Satisfaction</b>                       |                          |                 |              |                       |
| Rewarding skills                                 | 0                        | 1               | 4            | 1                     |
| Fair wages                                       |                          | 1               | 5            | 0                     |
| Autonomy at work                                 | 0                        | 1               | 4            | 1                     |
| Satisfactory work outcomes                       | 0                        | 1               | 2            | 3                     |
| High motivation                                  | 0                        | 0               | 6            | 0                     |
| <b>3. Team work</b>                              |                          |                 |              |                       |
| Communication                                    | 0                        | 1               | 4            | 1                     |
| Rewards for team work                            | 0                        | 1               | 5            | 0                     |
| Harmony  | 0                        | 0               | 5            |                       |
| Self directed teams                              | 0                        | 0               | 4            | 2                     |
| Influence on performance ratings                 | 0                        | 0               | 6            | 0                     |
| Free and open discussions                        | 0                        | 1               | 2            | 3                     |
| Full participation in decision making            | 0                        | 1               | 5            | 0                     |
| Adequate communication from leaders              | 0                        | 1               | 4            | 1                     |
| Discussions are encouraged                       | 0                        | 1               | 5            | 0                     |
| Shared decision making                           | 0                        | 1               | 3            | 2                     |
| <b>4. Organizational Culture</b>                 |                          |                 |              |                       |
| Innovativeness                                   | 03                       | 0               | 3            | 3                     |
| Knowing the vision of the university             | 0                        | 0               | 2            | 4                     |
| Involvement in creation of a new culture         | 0                        | 1               | 4            | 1                     |
| Collaboration                                    | 0                        | 0               | 4            | 2                     |
| Involvement in decision making                   | 0                        | 1               | 3            | 2                     |
| University competitiveness                       | 0                        | 0               |              | 6                     |
| Risk tolerant                                    | 0                        | 1               | 4            | 1                     |
| Outcomes are achieved sometimes                  | 0                        | 0               | 5            | 1                     |
| Outcomes are always achieved                     | 0                        | 0               | 1            | 5                     |
| Outcomes are never achieved                      | 6                        | 0               | 0            | 0                     |

### Limitations

There are several limitations to this study one of which is the lack of literature on the subject from the African perspective. Most of the literature on higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa has concentrated on issues of quality, finance and relevance (Banya and Elu 1997; Court 1991; World Bank

1988, 2000). The study is also subject to the limitations associated with the problems of cross-national survey methodology that was employed in collecting and analysing the data at Mzuzu University. The data for study were also limited to:

- 1 Two universities (Mzuzu in Malawi), and Amoud University (Somaliland), selected for this study.
- 2 The study is also subject to the limitations associated with the problems of cross-national survey methodology that was employed in collecting and analyzing the data for both universities.
- 3 This study is limited in the sense that it concentrated only on faculty and staff. Hence, it did not include other constituents like council members, students, senior administrators, the community and the politicians. In addition, the variables used did not include other aspects of institutional governance and leadership which would have revealed the underlying beliefs and values of the university.

## **Findings**

Out of all the subjects (62) that were given the survey, 90 percent responded and returned the survey. Nearly three-quarters of our respondents (75 percent) were male. Forty-two percent of all respondents from Mazuzi university said that there is a healthy work environment (The degree to which faculty and staff considered the university to be conducive to their work in terms of access to management; flexibility of policies; motivation; innovative culture & participation in decision making), while 58 percent noted that they are not satisfied with their work environment. On the other hand, 98 percent of all respondents from Amoud university responded favorably toward issues related to shared governance.

When respondents were asked to comment on the autonomy at work, 74 percent of Mazuzi respondents, and 99 percent of Amoud respondents reported that they are satisfied with autonomy that their work gives them.

With regard to team work (the degree to which faculty and staff saw the leadership operating in teams through communication; self direction; performance; participation; open discussions, etc.), 48 percent of Mazuzi respondents agreed that administration is responsive to their needs as they relate to team work items, while 53 percent were not satisfied with administration and participation in decision-making in a meaningful way. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority (98 percent) at Amoud university were highly

satisfied with team work, participation in decision making, and open communication between faculty and administrators at their institution.

### **Discussion**

While the results showed some satisfaction with the work environment, several aspects conducive for shared governance were missing. For example, communication up and down the hierarchy is a problem at Mazuzi University. This came out distinctly in the survey. There is also a culture of silence and confidentiality of information which means that most of the important information about the institution is kept away from faculty and staff. Both faculty and staff felt that they do not work as teams and that the culture of the university is rigid and centralized with limited chances of innovation. These aspects of the institution indicate that shared governance is not practiced at Mzuzu University. The study also found that there is no transformational leadership at Mzuzu university. Furthermore the environment at Mzuzu is not conducive for employee satisfaction, and collaboration is minimal and the communication channel is one way (from administrators to faculty).

On the hand, shared governance is an important characteristics of Amoud university. There is a clear channel of communication. Faculty and staff are highly involved in the decision-making process.

The results from this study show that although the founders had a vision of a less centralised institution and a more participative governance structure, Mzuzu university is still very much like its older sister with a very centralised bureaucracy. Power still rests with the Chancellor (state president), and Vice Chancellor. The university is only five years old and there is room for improvement, but this will need changes in the organisational structure itself. Perhaps it is time the Chancellor's chair became occupied by a professional from the University instead of the head of state. Leadership has to be more transformational instead of transactional so that the university becomes more inclusive and engages all faculty and staff to the maximum.

### **Recommendations for strengthening governance patterns of African universities**

The following recommendations are drawn from this study as well from other studies on the importance of shared governance in the African higher education systems. There is a need for democratisation of decision making within the university so that there is more participatory process in policy decision making. This would make the implementation of policies more efficient and effective. Democratisation could be achieved through wider representation of faculty staff and students in the key university governing bodies such as the senate, the council, and the various committees (Kiugu 1999). This will

ensure that faculty members and students have input in policies that affect them, and so be less likely to oppose implementation. In addition, there is need for more regular formal and informal contacts and consultations between the top university administration and student and staff. This would in the long run nurture the trust among the various stakeholders and avoid any unanticipated explosive situations. The current government of Malawi and former regime of Siad Barre of Somalia were constantly accused of frequent interference with the daily functioning of their respective universities. Tensions between the groups (administrators, staff, students, and auxiliary staff) in the university has been attributed to the government. To this end, it is recommended that the government of Malawi should refrain from interfering with the university autonomy, which is guaranteed by the legislative act. Instead, the government should strive to encourage rather than strifle academic freedom. The government should endeavour to safeguard the independence of the university with regard to the recruitment of administrators and faculty members, curriculum design, admissions, finances, research, etc.

African university leaders need to create environments that encourage constructive criticism and adaptation to rapidly changing scientific and societal circumstances. This will need transformation of prevailing patterns of paternalistic governance into structures of participation and accountability to involve faculty, staff and students as responsible partners. The road to this goal is transparency, information flow, representative participation, incentives and rewards for positive initiative and sufficient delegation. Mzuzu university in Malawi for example could begin with the following: Leadership to help faculty and staff to develop 'niches' by giving them a perception that they have a place in their academic community which is theirs and nobody else's. Everyone should feel part of the larger organisation. Organisational change is more likely to occur when academic units are encouraged to experiment and take risks. Instead of being held accountable for particular results, units are held accountable for conducting and assessment, interpreting the results and making informed judgments about what to do differently. Universities inevitably reflect the societies in which they operate (World Bank 2000). When a country like Somalia suffers from deep tribal rifts or conflicts, these will be present on the university campus. Undemocratic countries are unlikely to encourage shared governance in higher education. A society which is corrupt cannot have its higher education institutions unaffected. In short, external factors have a tremendous effect on universities. The transformational leader in Africa therefore needs various tools to help him or her.

First, he/she will need faculty councils and senates that are representative. Delegating powers to a faculty council and senate promotes shared go-

vernance by limiting top-down directives. Second, there should be a broader representation on the council. This is a buffer between the institution and the external bodies to which the university is accountable. Such a body should not just include political appointees but also members from the private sector. Third, there should be a transparent, logical and well understood set of rules for budgeting and accounting because these have an enormous influence on the operation and performance of the university. Rules should encourage flexibility, stability and transparency. Bureaucracy results in inefficiency and waste (World Bank 2000:64). Fourth, there should be data for decision-making. Without data and information, the leader, even if he/she is transformational, cannot make effective decisions. This include data on teaching, student achievement, research performance, institutional finance status and so on. Such data should be shared with faculty instead of being kept as 'confidential' by the administrators and the leader. Fifth, the chief executive (the Vice Chancellor) has to be elected instead of being appointed because he/she may lack wide support, hence diluting the sense of shared governance. Sixth, faculty quality is the most important determinant of the overall quality of a higher education institution. Nepotism, tribalism and inbreeding are enemies of faculty quality. Faculty and administrative staff should be rewarded for their performance rather than length of service. Finally, leaders need to realise that there is more to gain with transformational style of leadership and shared governance (World Bank 2000).

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## Appendix

Taking the presence of shared governance to be the dependent /effect variable, the following independent/cause variables were considered:

- Work environment (WE 1–10) The degree to which faculty and staff considered the university to be conducive to their work in terms of access to management; flexibility of policies; motivation; innovative culture & participation in decision making. (Rated on a 1–4 scale with 1 as strongly agree and 4 as strongly disagree).
- Job Satisfaction (JS 1–5) The degree to which faculty and staff perceived the rewarding system to be adequate; faculty autonomy; satisfactory outcomes & fair wages (Rated 1–4).

- Team Work (TW 1–10) The degree to which faculty and staff saw the leadership operating in teams through communication; self direction; performance; participation; open discussions etc (Rated 1–4).
- Organisational culture (IN 1–12) The degree to which faculty and staff knew the vision of the university; involved in the creation of a new culture; involved in decision making; see outcomes achieved & see the university as being tolerant to mistakes made. (Rated 1–4).

**Abbreviations used:**

WE = Work Environment (Statements 1–10)

JS = Job Satisfaction (Statements 1–5)

TW = Team Work (Statements 1–10)

IN = Innovativeness in the Organisation (Statements 1–12).