Deanship, Leadership Dilemmas and Management Challenges Facing the Social Sciences[1] in Public University Education in Kenya

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Abstract

This paper stems from a sense of unease with the current leadership and management of Faculties of Social Sciences in Kenyan universities. Guided by the belief that social sciences must be judged by their sound scholarship and their policy relevance, the paper discusses dilemmas facing deans of these faculties in the execution of their leadership roles in overall university management. The paper is premised on the fact that the university sector in Kenya is experiencing unprecedented change in an effort to meet local obligations and respond to the global higher education agenda.

Résumé

Cette étude résulte d'un certain malaise noté dans le leadership et la gestion actuels des Facultés des sciences sociales des universités kenyanes. Guidée par la conviction que les sciences sociales doivent être appréciées sur la base de leur bien-fondé scientifique et leur pertinence politique, l'étude examine les dilemmes auxquels les doyens des facultés font face dans l'exécution de leurs rôles de leadership dans la gestion globale des universités. L'étude repose sur le fait que le secteur universitaire kenyan connait des changements sans précédent dans un effort de respecter les obligations locales et de répondre à l'agenda global de l'enseignement supérieur.

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Introduction

University leadership in Kenya has enthralled and fascinated a number of scholars (see Gudo, Oanda & Olel 2011; and Sifuna 1998). While focus has been on general university management, academic deanship remains one of those rare topics that have not attracted proper scientific study. Yet, the quest to understand the place of an academic dean in university governance is as compelling as it is urgent.

This paper, therefore, argues that the huge transformations occurring on the education landscape in Kenya are having far-reaching leadership and management repercussions on academic deans as important members of university administration. Consequently, management and leadership styles of faculties of social sciences ought to be transformational. Yet, the training programmes and professional development that are essential for effective university management and leadership at the level of dean are neglected. The paper argues for innovative management and leadership by deans of the social sciences as necessary ingredients for the African university of the twenty-first century.

Deans of social sciences have a responsibility to their own calling as well as to university and national policy goals. As pressure continues to mount for universities to embrace further change, demands made upon deans of social sciences have become greater today than ever before. Owing to monumental leadership and management challenges that deans face, the legitimacy of social sciences is being questioned by some. For many reasons, but largely due to lack of effective leadership and proper management, connections between social science ideas and policymakers are less common today, and the gap may grow unless we rethink carefully the problem at hand. A crisis of leadership and management is compounding the crisis in the social sciences and thus undermining their relevance.

Situating Academic Deans in University Education in Kenya

The history of running university affairs and activities in Kenya has been characterized by three, often confusing, concepts: administration, management and leadership. This statement is perhaps more relevant in the case of the academic dean than any other holder of office at the university. Is an academic dean a manager or a leader? Or both of these rolled into one?

It is not easy to provide a satisfactory answer to this apparently simple question. This is especially so in the case of Kenya whose university education is a heritage of different styles of conducting affairs and serving the needs and demands of the state, society and the market. As a unit, the university is at the centre of these three, and must be effective and efficient in dealing with

them all. To deal with all these matters, universities have a variety of people from different backgrounds occupying an array of positions. An academic dean is one such a person whose roles, responsibilities and relationships in the university deserve scrutiny in the face of forces of change now in vogue in university education.

In order to understand the academic dean, it is important to describe the nature of the university in Kenya and its structure. Like most universities in the world, the university in Kenya is multi-formed and based on three coexisting forms of legitimate corporation: organization, institution, and community.

First, the university is an organization. It is a legal rational entity which employs labour and capital in formal processes and structures to generate the outputs of teaching and research. One instrument that clearly identifies the role of university education in Kenya is Universities Act (2012). According to the Act, in the discharge of its functions and the exercise of its powers under this Act, a university shall be guided by the national values and *principles of governance* set out under Article 10 of the Constitution (2010), and shall in that regard: promote quality and relevance of its programmes; enhance equity and accessibility of its services; promote inclusive, efficient, effective and transparent governance systems and practices and maintenance of public trust; ensure sustainability and adoption of best practices in management and institutionalization of systems of checks and balances; promote private-public partnership in university education and development; and institutionalize non-discriminatory practices.

In order to fulfil its mandate, public universities depend on the Council and Senate. Council is the executive body of a university's governance system, and is responsible for the management of resources. Members of university councils are people from outside the university, often appointed by the government to oversee the activities and operations of the institution on behalf of the government. The Council sets broad policy directions for the institution and follows up on how such policies are being executed by management. On the other hand, Senate is the supreme body as far as academic matters are concerned. Senate is responsible to Council in the execution of its mandate.

Both Council and Senate are guided by university statutes that provide the constitutional framework that allows the university to govern its administrative and academic affairs. The statutes set out the objects and powers of the university, and define the officers of the university. Both organs of the university and instruments of governance have, as their basic concern, the efficiency with which the university as an organization serves the demands and/or the needs of the state, society and the market. Deanship is one such office whose role is defined in the statutes. A dean of faculty is recognized

as a link in university management as they play an important role in policy formulation and implementation.

Second, the university is an institution which maintains permanent and intrinsic values of scholarship and service vested in collegiality. This commitment is reflected in university service charter, philosophy, mission, vision and quality statements. The dean is expected to be actively involved in actualizing these aspirations.

Third, a university is a community that develops relationships between various categories of members and provides social infrastructure and cohesion. University staff and students, alumni, and the public are some of the key stakeholders of a university. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, under which universities fall, to ensure that that function is performed as expected. The Commission for University Education, together with regulatory and professional bodies, also assumes important oversight roles. Once again, the dean is called upon to deal with students, staff and the public in the execution of university functions.

Owing to these forms of legitimacy, Lockwood (2010) says the university is multi-formed, pluralistic and fragmented because of the nature of its activities, and inevitable tensions arise out of different values and interests. Coupled with the academic structure of the faculty and forces of change now in vogue in universities, deanship becomes even more intriguing. Some faculties are the basic organizational unit of the academic life of a university while others are made up of departments. Furthermore, faculties are structured and operate depending on their disciplinary foundations, boundary differentiations and relationships with external professions. Deans have their roles and responsibilities depending on the kind of faculties they run.

There have been many attempts to replace the academic discipline as the base unit in Kenyan universities since the 1990s. For example, the development of research directorates separate from the teaching faculties has seen a number of changes that impact on the perception and performance of the dean. This includes: innovations with emphasis on interdisciplinary schools of studies replacing the traditional faculty model; and the reorganization of various elements of teaching and research into a matrix specialization, and then into 'schools'. The thinking informing the switch from faculties to schools, but retaining the dean at the helm, is to reduce overlaps in faculties wishing to control all their taught courses, especially those required by a number of disciplines, such as language, education and psychology. Schools are expected to be more flexible and effective in discharging their academic roles. This transformation from faculties to schools has swept across most public universities in Kenya, and with it the changeover from the traditional dean to an executive

dean, ostensibly and expectedly, with more and real power. However, these structural changes at integrating base units into a single school have been and remain complex and challenging. This is especially so considering advances in knowledge and the need to come up with autonomous schools, thus leading to multiplication and the danger of duplication.

The increasing scale and complexity of the public university is having an impact on the deanship of social sciences in Kenya. Knowledge explosion has led to the imperative need to cross traditional disciplinary boundaries, a factor that calls for the dean's leadership and management of curriculum development for purposes of responsiveness to environmental imperatives and also to ensure quality.

Another factor that impacts on deanship of social sciences in Kenya is the fact that sources of the development and transmission of knowledge are no longer confined to the public universities alone. Private universities and agencies and governmental institutions are quickly diminishing that monopoly. For instance, as of September 2014, there were 21 accredited private universities in the country offering social science courses. On the other hand, the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) is one of those agencies involved in a lot of research in the social sciences. What these examples demonstrate is that the social science research function of the public university is being challenged by these competitors. It then falls to the deans of social sciences to understand how to deal with these emerging changes and challenges.

The rapid and major expansion of students taking social sciences and its attendant pressure on resources is yet another force that is changing how the dean operates. In broad terms, typical public universities in Kenya have more than doubled in size since the beginning of this century, with a sizeable number of students enrolling in the social sciences. Equally important is that the expansion has increased the number of full-fledged public universities from seven in 2013 to 23 in 2015. While this number is set to grow with a number of colleges awaiting full university charters, the new universities are coming up with innovative social science courses. Thus, the expansion means that deans will be put to a great strain to deal with limited capital resources, ageing of staff, brain drain and funding of the social sciences, the growth of external competition and increasing public accountability. These are real challenges that confront the dean of social sciences in Kenya.

The development of technology and its impact on the social sciences has increased the importance of the place of the dean. While the impact of technological change varies according to disciplines, the social sciences, like other disciplines, have been subjected to the same change. For instance, almost all public universities in Kenya have initiated open and distance learning pro-

grammes in the social sciences that demand of deans to provide the necessary technological infrastructure. Therefore, the *e*-teaching function of schools and faculties of social sciences offers widened opportunities and requires planning to be focused. Technology is increasing the complexity and choices available in the social sciences and the dean is expected to respond accordingly.

The growing complexity and increasing challenges of the university, both internal and external, give rise to the demand and need for deans of social sciences to be more accountable to staff, students and society. The growth in the scale and importance of the social sciences require deans of faculties to explain themselves more fully as far as quality and relevancy are concerned.

These forces of change impact more upon the executive element of management or administration of faculties. This may account for the propensity for public universities in Kenya to appoint Executive Deans, unlike in the past where they were elected by members of their faculties, or appointed after going through some form of interview.

It is perhaps due to the foregoing complexity of the roles and responsibilities of deans that some commentators use the terms 'leadership' and 'management' interchangeably as if they were synonymous, while others use them in a very deliberate sense to convey that they are, in fact, quite different. Still others regard one (leadership) as a subset of the other (management). The very complementarity and symbiotic nature of capable leadership and sound management, however, as the *sine qua non* of organizational success, has often prevented us from recognizing that there is indeed, a very real difference between the two (McCaffery 2010:78). According to Turner (1998), the difference is exemplified not only in the characteristics and activities of managers and leaders, but also in the perceptions of them in the workplace.

Whichever way one wants to look at the issue, management is a corporate concept that deals with planning and control of resources, implementation of policy and administration of people who are results-oriented. A manager plans and budgets, controls staff and solves their problems, and does things right. In a word, a manager ensures there is establishment and maintenance of order in the unit he/she is heading by focusing on the system and its structure. On the other hand, a leader is someone who accompanies people on a journey and guides them to their destination. A leader focuses on people, sets direction, motivates and inspires them, has long-range perspective, challenges the status quo, produces change and does the right thing. The quest to reach an understanding of leadership – on its nature and essence, its style and meaning, its exercise and practice – is difficult (McCaffery 2010:77-79). The source of the difficulty lies in the fact that leadership is an endless subject (Syrett & Hogg 1992).

There is no doubt that the roles and responsibilities of an academic dean, coupled with the changes taking place in university education, pose challenges which require drawing on complementary sets of competences. It may not be a question of the academic dean being a manager, a leader or an administrator. An academic dean is expected to be capable and proficient as leadership, management and administrative functions are more closely integrated at their level than at the broader institutional level. Deanship deals with a myriad leadership, management and administrative functions. As the academic head of a faculty/school, a dean is expected to provide academic leadership and policy formulation. On the other hand, a dean is also involved with policy implementation and administration of the faculty/school.

Social Sciences in University Education in Kenya

Many universities in Kenya have gradually been opening themselves up to social science disciplines owing to the focus of the disciplines on the needs of the modern world. Even traditional universities that had difficulties in accepting new disciplines are adopting an open and pragmatic attitude towards the social sciences. For instance, the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology has the following social science courses: Bachelor of Business and Office Management; Bachelor of Business Information Technology; Bachelor of Commerce; Bachelor of Commerce and Business Administration; Bachelor of Community Health and Development; Bachelor of Co-operative Business; Bachelor of Development Studies; Bachelor of Entrepreneurship; Bachelor of Law; and Bachelor of Mass Communication. On the other hand, the Technical University of Kenya has introduced the following social science courses: Bachelor in Music; Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Diplomacy; Bachelor of Built Environment (Urban & Regional Planning); Bachelor of Commerce; and Bachelor of Economics. Technical University of Mombasa has Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies; Bachelor of Business Administration and Bachelor of Commerce. Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology has Bachelor of Education; Bachelor of Business Administration and Management Sciences; Bachelor of Economics; Bachelor of Accounting and Finance; Bachelor of Criminology; Bachelor of Social Work; and Bachelor of Journalism and Mass Communication.

The proliferation of the social sciences in public universities of Science and Technology in Kenya is more because of the pecuniary gains the institutions derive from it than the realization of their important role in society. Most, if not all, of the social sciences programmes have been initiated because they are easy to mount, cheap to operate and very lucrative as sources of scarce income, which is so dearly needed. With dwindling funds from the government,

Science and Technology Universities have devised strategies that will ensure that as many students as they can lay their hands on are recruited to join the social sciences, pay for the cheap courses on offer and use the same funds to equip Science, Engineering, and Mathematics and Technology laboratories.

The triumphant progress of the social sciences in public Kenyan universities lies in the fact that the disciplines are recognized to be important in tackling such societal challenges as conflict, crime, loss of civil cohesion, religious radicalization and the need for democratization. Communal, economic, political and social challenges facing the country have aroused unusual interest in the social sciences and this leads to the justification of their inclusion on academic menus of most universities. Consequently, there has been a massive influx into the universities with students hoping to confront those challenges with knowledge, skills and ideas mastered from the social sciences.

The development of social science education has been taking place gradually until the early 1990s when university education landscape in the country began changing rapidly. There have been conferences and recommendations for higher education reform to increase competitiveness. A number of initiatives have been taken with far-reaching consequences for university policy and management in general, and the social sciences specifically. The resulting guidelines published in the Education Act of 2012 and more specifically in the University Act of 2012 have introduced radical measures that will impact historical approach to many academic disciplines, including the social sciences. Dramatic changes have occurred in terms of numbers, cost, scope, diversity, size and complexity of universities that now exist in Kenya. Thus, the country's social science education market is now highly diversified with a wide range of choices.

The drive towards mass social science education stands as one of the watersheds in Kenya's university history. While a few years ago the country had only a small number of public and private universities, which were under the severe and continued pressure of spiralling student numbers, expansion since the early 1990s has truly been monumental. The total number of recognized universities in the country is distributed as follows:

University Status	Number
Public Universities	22
Public University Constituent Colleges	9
Chartered Private Universities	17
Private University Constituent Colleges	5
Institutions with Letter of Interim Authority	13
Registered Private Institution	1
Total	**67**

Source: Commission for University Education, September 2014.

With the establishment of a large number of universities at home, not many students now feel the urge to travel abroad; instead, they prefer to study locally. Consequently, enrolment rose from 75,000 students in 2002 to about 280,000 in 2014. These numbers will drastically increase when the first cohort of the Free Primary Education that was introduced in 2003 will be joining university in 2015. Under the programme, enrolment in public primary schools rose from 6.1 million pupils in 2003 to 8.6 million pupils in 2012. Again with the introduction of Free Day Secondary Education in 2008, the number of students in public schools has increased dramatically. It is with this in mind, and considering the 73 per cent transition rate from primary to secondary, that the Government of Kenya is planning to increase public universities to cater for the anticipated university students.

Another factor to consider is the bewildering number of university campuses and centres that are extending across urban centres in Kenya. In what appears to be cut-throat competition for students and money, both public and private universities are creating campuses and centres that target the same clients and so end up duplicating courses. What is noteworthy for our study is that almost all the newly established campuses and centres consist of only one faculty or several faculties that offer a variety of social sciences disciplines. But more than that, even in almost all of the existing main campuses of mother universities, the Faculties of Social Sciences are among the biggest in terms of enrolments. An explanation for this phenomenon could be that in their wisdom, university managers find social sciences a soft landing in their expansionism drive because they are 'soft sciences'. This is not the place for

me to discuss this skewed and biased position that has existed since the days of Comte and Spencer, but to agree with Prah (1993:14) that the hard-core of the prejudice lingers on as intellectual atavism of dinosaurian natural scientists, philistinism or sheer ignorance.

As far as research priorities are concerned, the social sciences can be said to have been neglected in Kenyan universities. Despite their centrality in development, the disciplines have not been assisted and promoted in terms of recruitment, staffing, funding and innovation. Most researches in the social sciences are individual efforts. Motivated and committed individual social scientists, guided by personal priorities and interests, are responsible for originating, designing, developing, raising funds, and executing research projects. This contrasts with efforts by the Government and such institutions as the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation that determine what natural science research they want carried out and how it is to be done.

But the social sciences should be accorded due respect; they should not be treated as cash cows for the nourishment of the 'natural sciences'. To this end, there would be value added if public university management in Kenya promote cross-disciplinary co-operation between all scientists in their institutions. Natural sciences serve in social realities and affect socio-economic change such that social science expertise cannot be totally separated from both. As Prah (1993:15) says:

> The object of study of the social sciences is society writ large. Social Science attempts to understand the structure, nature, and dynamics of human society, its organization, its past, present and future, in as far as this is understandable in its various dimensions of social life.

Also contributing to the complexity of university landscape in Kenya is the number of different types of institutions considered part of higher education. Middle level colleges, professional schools and technical institutions are partnering with universities and institutions in other countries which have set up their own 'branch' campuses in Kenya and which offer newer or developing professions that are dependent on the social sciences. The emerging, networked, invisible global college that operates more like a corporation than a traditional faculty is present in Kenya and competes with existing public universities. The variety of higher education institutions in Kenya are developing ways of doing social sciences which are maintained so long as they do not malfunction too greatly. As long as students, faculty, administration, and sources of funding are not too unhappy with the institution, there simply is no pressure to account for their relevance.

While a significant number of those enrolling in public universities in Kenya is from the traditional post-secondary students, non-traditional students, working full-time, form a sizeable population. There will likely be a host of other new entrants into the University education space in the current globally competitive, highly dynamic environment. Changed demographics have come with new needs and demands and compelled many new conversations and directions in university education. But most importantly, a revolutionary rather than evolutionary university education in social science programmes has significant management and leadership implications. Deans who oversee these programmes have the huge task of balancing global trends with local needs without sacrificing quality and relevance at the altar of quantity and income.

Management and Leadership of the Social Sciences in Public Universities in Kenya

The social sciences have made significant achievements in the development of Kenya. This is as a result of immense growth and development in the institutional base, methodological sophistication, and knowledge accumulation and dissemination. Despite their successes, the social sciences have also faced serious challenges that have necessitated rethinking the way they are managed and those who lead those efforts. This is especially so considering that the disciplines are not immune to global trends in higher education. Across the world, there is a change from elite to a mass system of higher education. Among reasons that account for this change include adoption of egalitarian policies that aim to increase education opportunities to a large population; social demand for investment in education as enhancement of economic growth and individual development; and the growing educational attainment of the world population that demands for continued learning opportunities and advanced educational credentials.

Like elsewhere across the world, there have been sweeping and far-reaching changes in Kenya with consequences on university education since the 1980s. The changes taking place affect all levels of university management, including deanship. These developments and trends have engendered reforms that have come with challenges which in turn affect faculty leadership and management. Effective faculty leadership and management are crucial in realizing the required reforms in a context of increasing autonomy and accountability. Without training in management and leadership development programme in many universities in the country, deans of social sciences may not be suitable to face the emerging challenges.

Kenya's public universities are in transition, owing both to global and continental developments in higher education. These dramatic changes are a

result of a complex interplay between broad social and economic forces and policy intervention. The 2012 Universities Act lays out plans for significant structural and systemic changes in the organization and funding of universities in the country. Responding to the emerging needs of the changing university education represents one of the most fundamental challenges facing faculty management and leadership. With the transformation of university education, the function of the social sciences is also changing. These developments have fundamental implications for the management and leadership of Faculties of Social Sciences.

The changes in university education are impacting social sciences in a variety of ways: among the developments that are discernible include expansion and increasing marketization of higher education and the increasingly heterogeneous student body. These come with differing needs, interests, and circumstances of students, comprehending a complex interaction of factors such as age, gender, disability, employment status and family situation. The task of dealing with new types of learning, including *e*-education, the blurring boundaries between formal and non-formal learning as exemplified by developments such as institution-based partnerships, opportunities for collaboration, assessment and accreditation which takes place outside universities. More specifically, these changes can be viewed as leadership challenges in a way.

Deans, as university leaders, have a role to play in the unfolding transformation. Priorities for leadership and management in university faculties have to be refocused in terms of organizational development and change, leadership styles, planning and monitoring, and instruments and tools. This means that a dean's leadership and management are related to the context in which their roles and tasks are performed. Because there is no 'one single way' to effectively lead and manage a university or faculty, deans ought to have knowledge of the relevant environment in which their faculties operate.

First, the trend towards greater vocationalism or labour market relevance in academic programmes that manifests itself through greater emphasis on the growth of professional programmes calls for changed leadership of faculties of social sciences, allowing them to concentrate on their core mission and clientele. This means greater specialization in and commercialization of research and teaching that is applied and relevant to the needs of society.

Second, is the challenge of flexibility which ought to exist in relation to the organization of study, the curriculum, policies regarding the overall profile and emphasis of faculties of social sciences, and their impact on society. For instance, there is the issue of continuing education opportunities for those learners who do not aim to study as part of a formal degree course. An increasing number of students in the faculties of social sciences are frequently

seeking shorter courses on non-credit programmes. The availability of such courses or programmes in the faculties is thus another indication of their commitment to playing a part in a broader system of education. Significant efforts in continuing professional development ought to be instituted to ensure there are well designed programmes that are increasingly based on market principles. But it has to be borne in mind that there are institutions outside the university sector which also provide the same. The growth of professional continuing education from the periphery of universities into core units reflects the fast turn-over of knowledge and faculties of social sciences have to update their knowledge in a more systematic way. They have to embrace continuing education as part of their mainstream mission.

Third, the expansion and diversification of the student population coupled with the dynamics of knowledge production have resulted in growing complexity and uncertainty. One of the challenges facing faculties of social sciences is the long duration it takes before qualification. On average, students take four years to complete their undergraduate studies. This has become an urgent issue and takes even longer for non-traditional part-time students who may be employed. While faculties expect students to conduct their own studies in a completely independent way, there has emerged a need for guidance and monitoring in a fashion not very different from 'school-like' environment. As a result, not only is the drop-out rate high, the long duration at studies makes students spend too many of their productive years studying and by the time they graduate they are 'too old'. Delayed graduation may be associated with a lack of motivation on the part of the students, and it may also be caused by factors beyond their control, including lack of facilities. Thus, participation and the mode of study that accommodates the particular needs of a variety of learners, including open learning, modular courses, credit transfer, and part-time learning are challenges of management that deans of social sciences have to grapple with.

Fourth, the availability of funding in the form of student grants and loans plays an important role in whether one learns or not. Public university education in Kenya suffers reduced budgets, forcing the institutions to engage in efforts to secure additional funding from alternative sources. With reduced financial resources, faculties of social sciences are hard-hit as a majority of university students belong to them. Alternative financial schemes for the differentiated learners and other support mechanisms like assistance to the disabled and childcare facilities for non-traditional students are incentives of special importance to be considered by deans.

Deans of social sciences have to admit that expansion has serious implications to their leadership roles and management of faculties. This calls

for a change of views and perception of the social sciences at the policy and practical levels. The overall process of expansion of higher education has impacted the social sciences in terms of specialization and differentiation. There is now emphasis on matters such as the need for more attention to students, enhanced performance, establishment of linkages, and the expansion of interdisciplinarity.

Effective leadership and management make the difference in public universities today, by inspiring faculty, staff and students to perform. Consequently, university management and leadership require a particular set of knowledge and skills. In their absence, deans face challenges working in universities that are operating in a complex environment. Knowledge and competence in the effective management of learning, people, policy and resources will lead to delivery of quality and relevant social sciences. Specifically, initiatives have to be instituted around issues of policy reform, institutional strategy making, faculty and university development, change management and various other matters dealing with the governance and administration of academic processes.

In order to effectively play their roles, deans are forced to go through the process of innovation and institutional reform to cope with these challenges. Institutional reform calls for innovation in management and leadership where governance skills are required in the areas of policy reform, institutional strategy making, organizational development, change management and the administration of academic processes. But, in the absence of a deliberate strategic policy and programme, the deans are in real danger of causing crises and decline in the social sciences. What deans of social sciences need are models of leadership and management that can more readily take advantage of the challenges and opportunities offered by the changes taking place. They need to shift their focus from reform that is devoted to fixing the social sciences to rethinking and reshaping them.

Roles and Responsibilities of an Academic Dean

The role of the academic dean is one that is multifaceted, challenging and often ambiguous. This often results in an inability to truly define a dean's purpose (Walker, 200:1). According to DiFronzo (2002), there are several reasons why it is difficult to describe the role of the dean. First, there is the issue that there are many types of deans who work in many different areas of higher education. There are also various types of higher education institutions in which deans can serve. There can be many deans at different levels working in assorted areas and in different capacities. This can make defining the single role quite difficult and confusing. Gould (1964:9) states that there is no such thing as a standardized dean.

Therefore, the lack of focused and sustained research on the role of an academic dean in university education in Kenya may be ascribed to the ambiguity of their roles, responsibilities and relationships. Yet, in universities, as hierarchies of authority, deanship is a managerial position that has been undergoing evolution characterized by change that has come with new roles and responsibilities over the years. Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez and Nies (2001:6) state that a dean's duties have changed over time from being almost exclusively student focused to include a multifaceted array of roles, such a budgeting and fundraising, personnel and work environment management, programme oversight, and external public relations. These changes have resulted in a huge amount of additional administrative work at the level of dean, and the requirement for a wide range of specialist skills in areas that go beyond their training such as marketing, human resource management, management accounting, web development and instructional design. While a substantial volume of this additional workload has been added to that of the academic dean, much of the new work is supposed to be managed by the same individual who lacks formal leadership training. But being academics more than professional administrators, and in response to systemic change in university education, deans face a myriad challenges in the execution of their duties.

The arrival of management in the university is a as a result of the realization that in order to fulfil the academic objectives of the institution in the environment obtaining, there is a need for management rather than just internally focused administration. The development of management is crucial to the ways and means through which universities adjust to major changes in their political and economic relations with the state and society, and to the equally major shifts in the structure of knowledge, the development of technology and the massive increase in the demand for university education (Lockwood 2011:160).

While Kenyan public universities are undergoing reform, management culture does not conform and this leads to relationships characterized by tension and rivalry. This is because most administrative and academic staff approach their work differently. The two groups come from different professional backgrounds whose values and practices, although often complementary, are equally in conflict most times. And while universities are undergoing change, deans assume a wider variety of responsibilities more than their professional administrator colleagues. For deans of social sciences, they are concerned with the primary activities of the university (teaching and learning, research and scholarship, public service) and the support services and infrastructure necessary for those activities (resource availability, allocation and usage, student recruitment and evaluation, provision and maintenance of resources; development of social services for the students).

Management of Resources

University resources are fiscal, facilities, and human. As heads of faculties as cost centres, deans have responsibility for faculty, staff, and students in assuring a positive, high-quality working environment. Deans of social sciences are called upon to handle both resource administration and academic adminis-tration. To do this, they need good relationships with specialists so as to deal with the technical financial aspects of resource management related to staff. A dean, therefore, spends time with professional administrative colleagues in finance and planning, obtaining information and necessary advice on staffing, purchase of equipment, space allocation, formulation of research funding applications, and effective usage of time of the academic staff. In this way, the dean becomes an active player in the open and participative process of corporate planning and governance.

The challenge is that resource forecasting and allocation has to be done through processes and means adaptable and responsive to environmental change and opportunities. With reduced funding to universities in general, and to the social sciences in particular, deans do not have both the freedom and the responsibility to manage available resources. And without management skills, crisis management creeps in.

Education Mission

The dean plays a crucial role in shaping the goals and priorities of their faculty consistent with the priorities outlined in the university's overall plan. The dean creates the roadmap for achieving the goals identified and articulated in the planning process.

Thus, a dean plays a leadership role in coordinating department chairs, committee chairs, graduate programme directors, and faculty members to ac-complish the goals of the faculties of social sciences, which serve the mission of the university. A dean is also expected to maintain a record of scholarship and ensure the integrity, quality, value and relevance of the academic programmes within their jurisdiction. In carrying out these duties, the dean will relate to other management arms by providing leadership necessary for the realization of the short term and long term goals of both the faculty and the university. More importantly, the dean's role is to enhance the stature, reputation, and visibility of their faculty and academic programmes on offer.

Student Affairs

Generally, the student experience of the university of the twenty-first century is radically different from that of the past. Changes in student lives and expec-

tations constitute a formidable challenge to institutions and their managers, including deans. Students as fee-paying clients have every right to expect to be treated as consumers; for higher education is no different to any other service industry (Waterhouse 2002). Students do not interact with their institutions solely and exclusively on the basis of being 'learners'. The multiple roles of the modern student include not only learner, but also citizen, colleague, consumer, scholar and perhaps most important of all, partner. From a student perspective, theirs is a service relationship and we should recognize it as such and strive to provide service excellence to them as customers (McCaffery 2010274).

A dean's responsibility to their students is about satisfying their needs and meeting their expectations as consumers of social sciences. While service provision, facilities, sports and social life of students are matters handled by the dean of students, teaching and supervision of their learning falls under the academic dean. With a mass public university system in Kenya, with a more diverse student profile than ever before, with far greater opportunities for study on- and off-campus, and with the introduction of variable fees, the dean of social sciences has the task of ensuring that students' crowded lifestyles do not affect their relationship with the university and affect the quality of education. Apart from putting in place needed programmes to help students achieve academic excellence, they also have to monitor their academic progress like retention rates, graduation rates, and other indicators of success.

Full-Time Faculty Matters

The extra-ordinary development in public university education in Kenya has brought about quantitative and qualitative changes for the teaching staff. The expansion of the social sciences has led to staff growth, especially at the junior staff level, and this has affected faculty internal structure and quality. While the increase in teaching staff should ideally be a good thing, it presents a more complicated picture. Because the sudden demand of large numbers could not be met satisfactorily in faculties of a number of universities and in certain social science disciplines, junior staff 'force' themselves to be rapidly promoted to senior posts. While qualification for any university academic post is supposed to be mainly, if not exclusively, gained through success in research, too many variables come into play so much so that experience and hierarchical order may not count for much in promotions that take place in some faculties of social sciences. A trend is emerging where patronage, loyalty and non-academic relationships are causing staff to be invented and to rise through the ranks without direct contact with research. In some cases, professorships are determined and decided upon beyond the control of deans of social sciences.

Scholarly and scientific work is, thus, suffering as a result of the foregoing. While the growing importance of professional organizations and academic journals as playgrounds in which reputation is built and sustained cannot be gainsaid, there are distorted criteria for promotion. The recruitment process is not guided by scholarly and scientific factors; rather extraneous considerations count more, leading to dissatisfaction and frustration to those who are overlooked and who eventually take off. In cases where such abuses abound, the dean is not in a position to counter.

Another old problem that still bedevils staff in the social sciences in public universities in Kenya is the relationship between research and teaching. Finkenstaedt (2011:169) argues that just as research is linked to publication, so teaching is connected with examining, and as examinations play such an important role in a meritocratic society, they not only mean work for the examiner, but they also endow them with power. Many teaching staff treat examinations very casually as a result of too many tasks they are performing in and out of universities. This is a challenge that the dean has to deal with.

Academic Accountability

The fulfilment of the requirement for academic accountability is a factor in the development of university management. Along with and through departmental chairs, deans guide faculty in developing annual professional development goals for teaching, scholarship and service. The growing complexity of the social sciences raises the need and demand for accountability. The disciplines need to explain themselves more fully to society in terms of their distinctiveness, their quality assurance mechanisms, and their role in development. The need for faculty efficiency and for full and effective accounting to the students and the public considerably increase the role of deans in management.

Another obvious academic area in administration by the dean is examination, which is most closely linked with teaching itself. The great importance of examinations and degrees in attributing roles to graduates in a meritocratic society has made examining a complicated, time-consuming and sometimes nerve-racking business for the academics of today (Finkenstaedt 2011:169).

Managing staff performance is demanding even in the best of circumstances. It is doubly so in unfavourable climate which prevails in so many academic institutions. It is one of the most enduring and contentious issues as it is frequently perceived as an unwelcome intrusion into faculty academic freedom. Deans in public universities are required to contribute to, as well as implement, their university's performance management. This is a challenge that they are not prepared for due to lack of training.

Deans also exercise supervisory authority in the annual performance reviews of all full-time faculty members in their faculties. This is done through a variety of ways including: making recommendations for staff travel, leave, contracts, renewals, new positions, hiring, and restructuring; developing new academic programmes and providing leadership for systematic and timely review of programmes within their faculties.

Deans of social sciences serve a dual role of scholar and administrator. They answer to a variety of constituents, including faculty, university administration, students, and others who may require their services. Deanship is a demanding work inherent with stress associated with the comprehensiveness of responsibility. If effectively managed, faculties can make a significant contribution to the running of the university. However, deanship is neither a smooth nor an uncontested management process. Consequently, conflict and dilemmas are an inevitable corollary of a dean's leadership and management.

The various demands facing deans often limit their ability to accomplish their primary tasks. Because of the wide variety of roles deans assume at any given institution, generalizing about their work is difficult (Martin 1993). However, Dill (1980) generalizes the duties of deans who hold varying role requirements in differing institutions. These duties include (i) Integrating the interests of various constituencies into a common sense of purpose, including goal setting and strategic planning; (ii) Creating incentives from existing resources to stimulate new and continuing contributions and commitments to the institution; and (iii) Maximizing the institution's efficiency in transforming contributions and commitments of all kinds into educational products and services.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Practical Conflicts and Dilemmas

Practical conflicts pervade the life of a dean of social sciences. Many different desires, goals, values, commitments, and obligations too often come in conflict with each other. Fraser and Neville (1993) opine that every leader and manager should anticipate and prepare to handle a conflict. Conflict is not without merit: it can be constructive as much as destructive. This is because, as a source of energy and creativity, conflict allows new ideas to surface and to create positive forces for innovation and change. Handled constructively, conflict enables individuals to examine their ideas and beliefs and to stretch their imagination, thereby providing a wider range of options and the prospect of a more favourable outcome. On the other hand, conflict is unhealthy when it is either avoided or approached solely on a win/lose basis and can manifest in breakdown in communication, deterioration in mutual trust and support, open hostility and revolt (McCaffery 2010: 152).

Raz (2004;172) argues that people face a practical conflict in two situations: when they are in a situation in which they have reasons to perform two acts (or more) such that they can perform either but not both; or/and where they have several reasons for action such that complying with one makes it impossible to comply with another. A dean facing such situational conflicts, therefore, finds themselves in a difficult dilemma. According to Baumann and Betzler (2005:1), among the many different reasons for action that can conflict with one another are desires, preferences, emotions, interests, goals, plans, commitments, values, virtues, obligations, and moral norms. They argue that closer investigation is required in order to explain why exactly an individual is confronted with such a conflict, and what they can do with regard to its resolution.

Deans of social sciences face many dilemmas, whether classic or complex. In their day-to-day operations, choices have to be made between two or more solutions that could be equally construed as right. Ethical and moral issues arise while making decisions in such dilemmas. And the ethical decision-making dilemmas deal with both short- and long-term consequences. The dilemmas arise in various domains, take many different forms, and pose a management and leadership challenge to the dean. Among the dilemmas deans face are administrative, curricular, evaluation, certification, student affairs, and staff matters.

Administrative activities of faculties of social sciences can be viewed in either structural or operational terms. Structural issues concern such matters as the size and number of departments. The leadership of the department is also a structural matter. This is especially so considering their relationship with the dean. While the dean may be desirous and instrumental in starting various social science disciplines, the final decision in establishing administrative units lies elsewhere. Normally, it is the vice-chancellor, at times in consultation with top university management, who decides when it is convenient to set up a department. For instance, in some public universities in Kenya, chairpersons of departments are appointed by the vice-chancellor, whereas the dean is elected. Departments may also have other administrative units whose heads are appointed not by the dean, but by the vice-chancellor. In this arrangement, the chairperson's loyalty lies with the appointing authority and not the immediate supervisor, in this case, the dean. Operational question here deals with how satisfactorily the faculty, as an administrative system run by an elected dean or an appointee of the vice-chancellor, will wield power and authority over chairpersons who are not under strict obligation to receive directives from them.

External groups become involved in both structural and operational issues of the faculty, with different kinds of groups giving attention to different

types of issues. For instance, the deputy vice-chancellor in charge of academic affairs is most likely to deal directly with a chairperson of department in matters related to examinations than a dean of a faculty. The chairperson of a department is the chief examinations officer of their department and not their dean. As might be expected, those administrative activities that most directly affect students are the ones that attract the greatest interest of top university managers. The chairperson of department is more important and relevant here than the dean.

Social science programmes – their curricula, teaching methods and materials – are matters that are better handled at the faculty level. However, in reality, these issues face interference from other quarters in the university. A department that wishes to purchase equipment for teaching, or one that wishes to take students for field-work, have to depend on the procurement officer and finance officer to approve and process requisite funds. Although universities may have procedures and processes to be followed, bureaucratic red-tape may influence the acquisition of the material or even the trip to be made and thus affect curriculum implementation.

On the other hand, whereas professional lecturers are typically regarded as experts in these matters, conflicts arise when issues are raised with the way some lecturers carry out their duties. Ideally, students belong to the faculty, with a majority taking courses from different departments in the same faculty or even different faculties. For instance, an external examiner may disapprove of the way a given lecturer awarded marks in their course. The Faculty Board of Examiners has to make the final decision on the fate of the concerned students.

So, how does a dean avoid conflict? Or deal with it constructively? There are strategies that may be helpful in confronting conflicts and dilemmas. First, a dean has to understand their faculty environment properly, taking into account that conflict results from individual differences and their needs, objectives, values and beliefs, perceptions, motives, expectations and levels of commitment. As McCaffery (2010:153) argues, you should be able to anticipate the degree to which prospective changes or issues are likely to be contentious and to monitor them.

Second, recognize that there is no single best way of handling conflict. Thomas and Kilman (2002) have identified five strategies of approaching conflict: avoiding; accommodating; competing; collaborating; and compromizing. They say that each of us is capable of all the five conflict-handling modes and thus need to select the right one depending on the conflict and the situation.

Third, the best option that offers the greatest potential is that of facing a conflict rather than avoiding it or diffusing it. McCaffery (2010: 158) says that managing conflict assertively means examining its cause by working with

others, attacking the problem, allowing others space, listening actively, and valuing openness; clarifying expectations by focusing on and listing interests and compatible areas, asking and encouraging questions, and being firm and fair; developing options for mutual gain by dividing the problem into smaller and more manageable units, clarifying remaining areas of disagreement, generating new ideas, and involving others; lastly, agreeing on a course of action by relating the problem to work objectives, seeking solutions, agreeing on joint actions, and exploring ways of avoiding repetition of conflict. McCaffery (2010: 159) warns that acquiring and maintaining the skills necessary and applying the most appropriate conflict-handling mode will not be easy. You may well need professional training to help you.

Blending Management with Leadership

The social sciences have been in existence in Kenyan public universities as intellectual and structural entities for long. That the social sciences have over the years undergone turbulence and declined in popularity and prestige is a fact that is least contestable. That they are tolerated more than appreciated is also a fact. One only needs to look at the fate of such disciplines as sociology, anthropology, philosophy, history and political science at public universities in Kenya in terms of theorization, research, establishment, funding, and enrolment. There are systematic biases in the national science and higher education system which explicitly (and sometimes not so explicitly) constrain, weaken and disadvantage the social sciences. These concerns relate to matters of funding, institutional support, reward systems and many other key components of these systems.

The structure of the social sciences in Kenyan public universities is highly heterogeneous. Whereas most disciplines exist as separate departments, for instance History and Religious Studies, some are found as composite departments, for example History and Political Science, and Religious Studies and Philosophy. In some cases, the social sciences appear as 'programmes' and not independent departments. However, the growing acceptance and importance of the social sciences give them a renewed mandate as being both legitimate and desirable fields of study. Any fears of their imminent 'demise' need to be allayed by this fact. However, it would not be an exaggeration to say that every field in the social sciences does have a challenge to some degree.

Despite existing challenges, the social sciences have considerably expanded in Kenya. If the number of new universities and faculties being established is a measure of growth, then the social sciences have grown. However, one needs to be careful and delve into the core businesses of research, teaching and community outreach to really appreciate the status of social sciences in the country. The artificial growth of the social sciences is planned as a key element

in supporting other university programmes, than for their own scientific and professional perspectives. It will not be lost to a keen observer that the social sciences are facing deep crises of leadership and management. They do not enjoy the prestige that natural sciences have, and they are more tolerated than appreciated. As such, they are less of a priority at both national and institutional level. However, the turbulent times that have gripped society now potent good fortunes for these disciplines and favour their regeneration and popularity as they analyse the conditions and possibilities of society and its organizations and failures, with a view to changing them for the better.

The blending of management and leadership roles and responsibilities is essential if deans are to address the dilemmas that face the social sciences. Understanding the dynamics, differentiation and integration of these aspects of governance will help them to be effective in discharging their duties. As Khurana (2002) says, individualism is assumed in most concepts of corporate power, rarely does one individual exercise great power in complex organizations. Yet performance is often attributed to the individual at the top.

Leadership and management live in a symbiotic relationship, with each influencing the fate of the other. While the two are interdependent and intermeshed in the exercise of power, in a university setting, this symbiosis is not always one of mutual amity and support. Instead, it is made up of a variegated complex of exchanges that are sometimes cooperative and other times competitive.

Deans of social sciences have to play an active role in resolving challenges that confront them daily. They have to be strongly committed to continuing the vitality of the scientific mission of these fields. They have the challenge of increasing the credibility of the fields by developing a methodology that gives them greater vitality. The unfortunate decline in theory in the social sciences is yet another area of concern that deserves attention from the deans.

If the social sciences are to impact society, as is expected, deans must transform their leadership. A transformational dean should exhibit such traits and behaviours that inspire and motivate his staff and students to rally around a common vision for the social sciences. Transformational leadership of the social sciences is an important factor at both the faculty and university levels. It is this kind of leadership that will determine the growth and worth of the social sciences.

A dean's transformational leadership will transcend beyond narrow disciplinary boundaries into and across related disciplines. Deans of social sciences should be able to align their faculties with the overall university mission and societal expectations. Social scientists should serve the development needs of society through research, teaching and community service. By setting the

direction and vision of their faculties, deans of social sciences will help them meet new academic and intellectual challenges.

Without powerful leadership and effective management, the role of social sciences in development will remain inadequate. Thus, it is imperative for deans of social sciences to bring about a qualitatively new co-operative relationship with students, staff and society. The traditional leadership of faculties must change if the social sciences are to attain their rightful status in university education. A good partnership, based on shared values and mutual trust, is the foundational stone upon which social science faculty transformational leadership should be anchored.

Conclusion

There are many conflicting demands and influences on the dean as head of a faculty. Leading and managing a faculty in contemporary higher education is a daunting task. Faculties of social sciences ought to be guided by clearly formulated objectives, conditions, obligations, roles and responsibilities as part of the partnership between the dean, staff, students and all those in line of their duties. By setting an example through passion, charisma and the ability to motivate others, a dean of social sciences will allow both staff and students not only achieve success, but also transform their thoughts and actions.

Deans, like other leaders at all levels of university management, ought to be sensitive to, and keep abreast with current challenges besieging university education globally and locally. The successful leadership and effective management of a dean will depend on their ability to reform and transform their faculties. This is especially so considering that deans are an important management cadre who, if well and better prepared, can lead to overall university change and effectiveness. But it has to be noted that university education change is complex, and the deans' best intensions and genuine commitment have to be aligned with the university's mission.

As the African university of the twenty-first century begins to take shape, deans of social sciences are well aware of the challenges facing them and they need to deal with them in a farsighted manner. Just like in the private sector, a new generation of leaders and managers is required in the academy. Thus, the need to redefine deanship of the social sciences is as great as ever, considering their multifaceted roles in African universities that are confronting old and new leadership and management challenges. Whilst deanships differ between universities, they all face similar challenges of the corporatization of university management, commercialization of learning, and commodification of knowledge.

Social science disciplines are not a luxury and, while they adapt to the changing times, they should be at the core of the essential mission of the university and development of Africa. African universities must continue to be key sites for research and production of knowledge that is both responsive and relevant to developmental needs of the continent. While systems and institutions of university education are currently changing on the continent, the social sciences will need to change even more in the future so as to cope with new challenges. The deans have to be concerned with the quality and independence of knowledge generated by the social sciences, especially now that universities are underfunded.

It is recommended that a lot more focus be placed on the leadership and management of the faculties of social science. Investment in training of deans of humanities and social sciences should be a top priority for African universities. The training of deans as academic managers as well as professional administrators will strengthen African universities. Research and development institutions like CODESRIA should continue facilitating deans' interaction through exchange of leadership and management experiences. This programme will support African governments' efforts to develop world-class universities and prepare deans to be successful leaders and managers of institutions of higher learning that are able to respond to changing needs and emerging opportunities. By strengthening African universities, students and staff will be enabled and empowered to meet the needs of a changing world. Strong universities will help Africa grow and develop, and take its rightful place in the global economy.

Notes

1. Social Science is understood and used in this paper to refer to the independent and systematic study of human relationships, behaviour and structures. The fields of study include all those that pass for the Arts, Humanities and Education.

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