Leadership in Kenyan Public Universities and the Challenges of Autonomy and Academic Freedom: An Overview of Trends Since Independence

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Summary

It is the contention of this article that leadership, governance and management are key components in addressing the major challenges that face African universities in general and Kenyan universities in particular. Such challenges range from the function of the university, underfunding, infrastructure, globalisation trends, etc.These issues would be adequately addressed through committed and expert leadership that operates in an environment that guarantees autonomy and academic freedom of the institution, to provide for the delivery of quality service and accountability. However, on the basis of examples from Kenyan public universities,this article demonstrates a complete lack of these key ingredients and, hence, continued poor performance of the institutions. To address the many challenges being faced by higher education, an innovative organizational and leadership approach is required which taps into the individual and collective stakeholder creativeness and competencies in pursuit of core university functions. Increased democratisation and participatory decision-making based on mutual gains among the university system components will need to be researched and utilized.

Résumé

Cet article soutient que le leadership, la gouvernance et la gestion constituent les défismajeurs des universités en Afriqueen généralet au Kenyaen particulier. Ce défi concerne la définition de la fonction même de l'université, les effets de la mondialisation, le sous-financement, les infrastructures... Ces problèmes ne peuvent être abordésde manière adéquatesans unleadership engagés, agissant dans un environnement qui garantit autonomieet liberté académique. En s'appuyant sur l'expérience des universités publiques, l'article fait état d'un manque total de facteurs clés garantissant la performance des institutions. Dès lors, affronter les défisnombreux de

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l'enseignement supérieurexigedes approches novatricesd'organisationet de leadership; celles-ci doivent puiser dans la créativité des intervenants, individuels et collectifs,et dans les compétences nécessaires aux fonctions universitaires de base. À cet effet, une démocratisation accrue et des processus décisionnel participatif, fondés sur les composantes sociales du système universitaire, restent à concevoir et à mettre en œuvre.

Introduction

The terms 'leadership', 'governance' and 'management' are often used interchangeably although, generally, they do not mean the same thing. Leadership is a complex multifaceted process perceived as a set of values, qualities and behaviours exhibited by the leader that encourage the participation, development, and commitment of followers. Leadership is also considered as the art of influencing an individual or individuals in a particular direction that involves casting a vision, goal setting and motivating people (Spendlove 2007). As far as higher education is concerned, governance focuses on the rules and mechanisms by which various stakeholders influence decisions, how they are held accountable, and to whom. It specifically refers to 'the formal and informal exercise of authority under laws, policies and rules that articulate the rights and responsibilities of various actors, including the rules by which they interact'. In other words, governance encompasses 'the framework in which an institution pursues its goals, objectives and policies in a coherent and coordinated manner' to answer the questions such as 'Who is in charge, and what are the sources of legitimacy for executive decision-making by different actors?' Management, on the other hand, refers to the implementation of a set of objectives pursued by a higher education institution on the basis of established rules. It answers the question 'How are the rules applied?' and is concerned with the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of services provided for internal and external stakeholders. Despite the distinction between governance with its emphasis on the process of setting policies and long-term goals as well as the strategies for reaching these goals, and management that is action-oriented, the various links between the two cannot be overlooked (Eurydice 2008).

   In more practical terms, leadership and governance in higher education is said to involve the authority to make decisions about fundamental policies and practices in several critical areas concerning colleges and universities: their number and location, their mission, their enrolment numbers, the access of students to their instructional programmes and the access of citizens

to other services, degree requirements, the quality standards expected in student performance, the quality of research and public service activities, the freedom available to individual faculty members in their instructional and research activities, the appointment of staff, internal organizational structure, the allocation of available resources to operating and support programmes, and financial support. The problem of governance is therefore the location of authority to resolve these issues both internally and externally (Millet 1985).

Heads of institutions are normally vested with the largest degree of individual formal authority and responsibility within the universities. In most universities, the instruments and articles of government or statutes stipulate that the leader is directly responsible for the day-to-day management of the university, which includes directing and leading the university and its staff, determining academic activities in consultation with the academic board or senate and managing the budget and resources. As the chief accounting officer, the head is responsible to governors and funding agencies for ensuring compliance within the terms and conditions. The head is also the academic leader of the university, being chair of the academic board or senate, and in addition is responsible for representing academic interests internally to the council or board of governors and externally at a local, regional and international level. Traditionally, such chief executives are appointed to their salaried posts bya cadre of prominent academics without any formal training beyond their experiences in the academia (Bargh, Scott and Smith 1996).

The relationship between the key office holders in the leadership and governance processes, the chief executive and the academic bodies, could be seen as the essential element in the political and operational dimensions of decision-making in the universities. Ideally, it serves as a channel for the key players to exchange and communicate ideas and differences of opinion between the participating groups. It acts as an aid in the negotiation of outcomes. The effective operation of this communication channel is dependent on the maintenance of trust and goodwill between the main players within the institution. However, it is worth pointing out that effective communication and operations are dependent on the appointment processes of the chief executives and the capacity of the political regime to allow autonomy and academic freedom to thrive in the university.

In many African universities, leaders are not recruited for their leadership potential, but rather are selected and rewarded for their research, course development and/or teaching. African universities' vice chancellors, deans, heads of departments, school directors and others are often appointed based

on academic qualifications, and rarely receive critical training in strategic planning, budgeting, human resource development and faculty management. While some governments are establishing regulatory national councils of higher education, their management capacity and communication with the institutions they oversee often fall short. This article discusses some key leadership challenges for African universities, issues of autonomy and academic freedom and focuses on the operationalization of these conceptswith reference to the Kenyan public universities.

Some Key Challenges for African Universities' Leadership

Long before the turn of the century, research on higher education in Africa was increasingly showing institutions in a deep crisis. While many aspects of their revitalisation are now being addressed by governments and higher education institutions themselves, key questions still remain relating to the historical and present function and purpose of higher education institutions. There are issues on whether higher education should focus not only on teaching but also on development-oriented research as well as community outreach. There is also the major issue that, ideally, higher education institutions need to function in an environment of academic freedom and institutional autonomy within an overall framework of public accountability.

Among the key challenges behind the crisis in higher education is one of funding. Higher education in the African region has suffered from historical underfunding due to the structural adjustment policies (SAPs) and the influence of the emphasis favoured by international agencies for primary education during the 1980s and 1990s. Although these policies have been reversed in the last decade, evidence shows that higher education systems are still facing serious financial constraints, are severely under-resourced and are not capable of fulfilling the new expectations that are being placed upon them. As a compounding factor, student numbers are increasing everywhere, without a commensurate increase in resourcing. Quality, which is dependent on resources and particularly on the ability to attract and retain suitable staff, has suffered as a consequence (Sarua 2009).

Since government funding for higher education is unlikely to substantially improve in the short term, some diversification of income sources is necessary. Responses include the introduction of cost-sharing mechanisms which include fees, privatisation and, in some cases, dual-track provision, as well as plans for increasing commercial and fund-raising activities. Many universities have resorted to fee paying or parallel students taught in evening classes or usuallyduring the holidays. This model provides a source of income which

institutions need, and is viewed very positively in some sectors. However, the model has implications for the quality of the 'core business of universities' and there is a growing sense that the dual path has not contributed positively to institutional development. There are many African examples which show the negative impact that this approach can have on the core functions of an institution. Teachers overloaded by teaching both streams and supplementing their income are less likely to be able to fulfil their research roles. Fee-paying streams also, very often, have a more vocational focus than traditional generic degrees, which has implications in terms of what is being taught, and the reduction of university functions to a labour market production role (Sarua 2009).

There is the issue of infrastructure availability and quality which is fundamentally connected to funding. Although no regional infrastructure audit has been conducted, it is reported that there are severe infrastructure constraints in most institutions in Africa. These constraints are affecting the capacity for both teaching and research. Teaching effectiveness is being limited by inadequate facilities, laboratory equipment and computing infrastructure, while student access is limited due to insufficient classrooms or accommodation. Resources for research are of critical importance as the lack of them could be a primary contributor to the brain drain of scientists to industrialised countries (Nyaigotti-Chacha 2001; Sarua 2009).

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are an essential tool to enable higher education institutions to move towards participation in the knowledge society, facilitating better mechanisms for administration, alternative strategies for improving teaching and learning, tools for research, as well as mechanisms for improving research dissemination, communication and network building. There have been positive developments on this front in recent years; in particular the growth of available bandwidth. Despite these developments, many universities are continuing to experience critical constraints and have gaps in their ICT infrastructure and systems andscholarly publishing endeavours, as well as high process charges, which has led to a situation in which many institutions could be classified as 'knowledge-poor'(Nyaigotti-Chacha 2001; Sarua 2009).

There are also global trends in higher education, such as massification, funding reduction, adoption of new public management ideals with their stress on the accountability and efficiency domains, new relations and forms of relations with the state, and the adoption of market mechanisms and competition in a previously insulated sector which require changes both in the way that institutions view their activities, and the manner in which they are man-

aged. Traditional management styles, particularly the often-cited collegial model, have come under threat due to their apparent inability to adapt to the rapidly changing environment, and new, more managerial models which have sprung up in their place. Increasingly, a more professionalised management is seen as a necessary condition for the institutions' attempts to deal more adequately with both external and internal pressures and demands. These include greater planning and more efficient allocation of resources as well as providing incentives to academics to respond to opportunities and markets. The rising administrative profession is explicitly challenging the traditional dominance of the academics in institutional affairs (Nyaigotti-Chacha 2001; Sarua 2009).

Within the African context, changes in management practices have not been as profound as in more industrialised countries. To a large extent, in many nations the challenges being faced by the higher education sector are a continuation of years of underfunding, poor infrastructure and insulated systems. The times of rapid higher education change described as global trends have not had the same impact here that they have elsewhere, although pressures are being experienced from rapid growth in student numbers in some contexts, and from changing expectations on the sector in others. However, it is increasingly acknowledged that traditional models are no longer sufficient to position the sector for its role in national development (Nyaigotti-Chacha 2001).

The contexts in which African higher education is operating require, in some ways, greater skill and greater commitment than those in developed countries. The challenges of rebuilding higher education in the African region are great, and it will require a committed and expert leadership to achieve the necessary, profound changes. Development of the region is crucial, and higher education is being called on to play a role in problems such as poverty reduction and knowledge economy participation. Development of the leadership capacity within higher education to enable it to respond to this challenge is key to achieving this goal (Sarua 2009). It is however contended in this article that a committed and expert leadership to achieve such a goal requires an environment which guarantees autonomy and academic freedom of the institution to provide for quality service delivery and accountability.

Issues of Autonomy and Academic Freedom

Leadership and governance in higher education as defined above are inextricably linked to university autonomy and academic freedom, key ingredi-

ents of a modern university. From a historical perspective, colonial universities were patterned directly on institutions in the mother country, but often without the tradition of autonomy and academic freedom that the latter enjoyed (Gilbert 1972). Yet from the earliest beginnings of the university in the middle ages, down to the present century, autonomy or self-government has been the key ingredient in the ideology of institutions of higher learning (Perkins 1978). This ideology envisages the freedom or autonomy of the institution to make its own decisions on a broad complex of issues without interference from external, non-university agencies (Ajayi 1990).

Although academic freedom has long been considered a necessary condition for high academic standards, only recently has such freedom become a central concern of many African universities. Among the key reasons for this is that in their formative years, especially during the colonial era, most African universities were staffed by individuals having the same religious, political and social philosophies. Some of these colleges were strictly supervised with the intention of insulating students from any ideas not condoned by the colonial rulers. Makerere was a classic case of this situation as illustrated in the following quotation:

> One of the reasons for the establishment of Makerere as the University College of East Africa was that the political environment in which students studied for degrees could be more closely controlled, there being a wide fear in European circles that students who attended a university away from their natural background were likely to be manipulated by subversive elements, and on their return home would present a danger to the social order. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that there was considerable feeling that autonomy at Makerere should be limited in the interests of stability… and although this was not officially expressed, political activity by students was looked upon with considerable disfavour, and the college authorities minimized governmental influence in practice by exercising a fairly strict internal discipline (Southall 1974).

The traditional idea of academic governance stresses the importance of autonomy, and academic institutions have often used it to insulate themselves from direct control by external agencies. However, with the increase in size, scope, importance and cost of higher education, there have been immense pressures from those funding higher education, mostly the state, for accountability from institutions of higher learning (Altbach 1991). It has also been observed that, on the one hand, too much autonomy might lead to higher education being unresponsive to society and, on the other hand, too much accountability might destroy the necessary academic ethos (Lee

1997:198). Academic freedom and university autonomy, though related, are not synonymous. According to Berdahl (1990):

> Academic freedom is that freedom of the individual scholar in his/her teaching and research to pursue truth whenever it seems to lead without fear of punishment or termination of employment for having offended some political, religious or social orthodoxy.

Academic freedom is directed more at the individual level, whereas campus autonomy operates at the institutional level. Institutional autonomy can be further differentiated into substantive autonomy and procedural autonomy (Berdahl 1990). Substantive autonomy is the power of the academic institution in its corporate form to determine its own goals and programmes, whereas procedural autonomy is the power to determine the means by which these goals and programmes will be pursued.

In exploring autonomy issues, Berdahl (1990) argues that it is helpful to know whether the state is intervening in procedural or substantive matters. He maintains that the state ought to stay out of any issues that threaten to lessen the academic freedom of persons undertaking teaching and research at institutions of higher learning. The crucial domain is substantive autonomy, and government should not interfere with the 'heart of academia'.

It should also be qualified that universities' autonomy and academic freedom very much depend on the prevailing political system, since democracy by its nature guarantees autonomy while an authoritarian form of political organization denies the concepts of autonomy and academic freedom. In an authoritarian system, the activities of the state are normally centralized and the university is treated as an appendage of the government (Albornoz 1995). Since the African continent has been characterized by authoritarian regimes for a long time, they have not nurtured a political atmosphere for the existence of autonomy and academic freedom in universities although the situation is changing, albeit slowly.

Public University Governance in Kenya and Issues of Autonomy and Academic Freedom in the Kenyatta and Moi Era

Kenya has experienced a phenomenal expansion of public universities since the inauguration of the University of Nairobi in 1970 (formerly as part of the Federal University of East Africa). At the level of university management, stipulations by the acts of the seven current public universities (government universities), these institutions are supposed to be autonomous of government control. However, while the universities enjoy some relative measures of autonomy, government involvement in their governance has been a

common feature. Such involvement tends to have the adverse effect of limiting effective consultation and participation in decision-making by the various structures of university administration and members of the university community.

Kenya's political environment has undoubtedly been inimical to the development of university autonomy and academic freedom. Ironically, during the inauguration of the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta assured the university that there would be minimum government interference in the running of the university. He declared:

> While never ignoring or betraying the most precious functions of an academic body, this university must gear itself at once and with the constructive zeal to all needs and realities of nation-building. At the same time, any healthy university must be governed more by freedoms than by restraints. For this reason, we have enshrined within the University Act the greatest possible autonomy in terms of organization, teaching and research. If the mind of the nation is to flower through this university, then professors and lecturers must be free to teach their subjects faithfully, while students and research workers must feel free to pursue the truth and publish their findings without fear (Kenyatta 1970, cited in Furley and Watson 1978).

This declaration did not reflect the reality of the university at the time. According to the University of Nairobi Act and acts which established other public universities, these institutions are supposed to be autonomous. Although to some extent the universities have enjoyed some degree of autonomy in student admission and staff recruitment, government involvement in their running is routine. For all the public universities, the President of Kenya is the Chancellor. While this relationship could afford unique access by the university management to the executive arm of the government, it has commonly been used as a pretext for intervention by the president in university affairs, often without consultation either with the ministry responsible for university affairs or with the university itself. Many of his interventions have put universities in the intolerable position of being dictated to or interfered with by their own titular head, acting not in terms of authority conferred by the university statutes, but by virtue of his presidential power (Coombe 1991).

By the time Kenyatta died in August 1978, over the years since independence in 1963, he had crafted a highly authoritarian one-party state. The new President Moi assumed the presidency almost immediately and, to win support from the people, he released all political prisoners and detainees. He however continued the repressive style of leadership already established, by becoming intolerant to dissent. In September 1979,

he ordered the expulsion of student leaders and the closure of the University of Nairobi, after students criticized the government's decision to bar former opposition leaders from contesting the general elections. This was followed in 1980 by the banning of the Academic Staff Union (ASU). To block dissent which was clamouring for the formation of another political party, the government introduced an amendment to the constitution in parliament in 1982 that made the country a *de jure* one-party state. From there on, the government became increasingly intolerant of dissent and started detaining its critics who included university teachers. These were accused of teaching subversion.

The Chancellor appoints and dismisses vice-chancellors who in a majority of cases are not necessarily the most administratively and academically able, but those deemed to be politically loyal to the establishment from within the ranks of academic staff. The Chancellor's powers have extended to the appointment of other key university administrators, often in violation of the university acts and statutes.

The government also nominates most members of the university councils. While academic staff and students' representatives to councils are usually elected by their respective constituencies, key members of the councils, such as the chairman, deputy, the minister for education, and permanent secretaries of ministries dealing with universities are nominated by the Chancellor. In all public universities, more than 60 per cent of the council members are nominees of the Chancellor or some kind of nominees by him. In this system of appointing council members, it has often turned out that the government's views have become particularly dominant in council deliberations and it easily steers university affairs in the government's favour, with full protection of the law (Mwiria 1992).

This system of university council governance has seriously undermined public universities' autonomy and academic freedom. The government has on many occasions used the councils to order university closures, and to implement government directives in the number of students to be admitted, and terms and conditions of service for university staff, teaching and travel agendas, and by requiring them to obtain official research and travel authority. Academic staff have been victimized and marked down, even within the universities, for exercising their freedom of association, freedom of speech and for criticizing university policies or powerful individuals within the universities. With increasing repression in the political system, a situation developed in which any form of critical analysis from staff and students in the universities was equated with a preference for 'foreign ideologies', which

was taken to mean Marxism or communism. The reprisals against people thought to be involved in such subversive activities have been serious. These have included police harassment, denial of official clearance, denial of promotions and withdrawal of passports to prevent them fromtravelling outside the country. Such punitive measures and threats have stifled academic freedom, which is the basis for intellectual production (Nkinyangi 1983:212). Undoubtedly, similar situations have existed in many other African countries with repressive governments (Amare 1977).

The Political Multi-party Era and Issues of Autonomy and Academic Freedom

With the era of political multi-parties, some attempts have been made, since 2003, in a number of countries to change the nature and structure of university governance. In Kenya, for example, following the 2002 general elections which ushered in a new 'democratic' government, the president relinquished his position as Chancellor of all the public universities. Instead, he appointed 'eminent' persons to serve in that position. In addition, the political appointment of vice-chancellors by the president was also squashed, ushering in some measure of competitive appointment of these executives. While such changes have been hailed as an important landmark in the governance of these institutions, however, without making some drastic revisions of the instruments and statutes under which the public universities were established, the dominant government control of these institutions and the autocratic practices by the chief executives are still in place. Even in the so-called competitive appointment of the vice-chancellors, the search committees and related appointing structures normally have to recommend several candidates from whom the Chancellor selects one, who may not necessarily be the top candidate.

Some studies have lately noted that under the KANU (Kenyatta and Moi) era administration, staff recruitment, deployment and promotions were largely influenced by party politics. This changed somewhat when the NARC administration came to power in 2003, with the president relinquishing the position of Chancellor. It is also noted that the positions of vice chancellors and deputies were filled through competitive open advertisements, with the limitation noted above. For a while, this worked and at least universities were becoming centres of meritocracy. However, the appointment of top university managers in public universities in Kenya lately has been a subject of discussion in the education circles because it appears to lack ethnic balance. It is noted that a trend has emerged where chancellors, vice chancel-

lors and council chairpersons are appointed from the community where a university is located. The appointment of the next layer of officials follows that pattern, with the result that universities have become ethnic enclaves. It is warned that unless this trend is checked, we may reach a situation where universities are reduced to village entities, where students are recruited from their localities and staff meetings are held in vernacular. A politically compromised university management cannot promote a delivery of quality education. It has also been found that tribalism and nepotism hinder equal employment opportunities in universities, as they promote negative ethnicity and intolerance from university administrators (Ndegwa 2007; Gitahi 2010; Sifuna 2010).

There are indeed many areas of university governance which demonstrate a continuation of autocratic management, among the key ones being the handling of trade disputes with staff. As noted in one study, the management of strikes in public universities in Kenya has been based on a conventional top-down approach which further undermines the greatly needed quality of human and social capital that is responsible for implementing the university mandate towards sustainable development. For the university to achieve its mandate of learning and teaching, research, outreach and community service, all system components must work together for the common good through synergistic partnerships. Whenever industrial action takes place, however, the leadership reflects failed efforts in terms of conflict resolution, and often triggers a chain reaction whose cumulative effects have far-reaching results on quality delivery. Reprisals from university authorities and government have traditionally been perceived as being autocratic and counterproductive in the long run, particularly when viewed from a quality service perspective. This autocracy also seems to contradict the inherent spirit within the philosophy, vision and mission statements detailed in various university strategic plans (Waswa and Katana 2008). According to Goleman (1998), contradictions between vision/mission statements and reality inevitably result in emotional fallout exemplified by self-protection, cynicism, anger and despair.

A good number of studies have also established that management of public universities did not effectively involve their staff and students in decision making as were the private universities. Effective involvement of staff in decision making leads to ownership of the management decisions and creates conducive environment for effective teaching and learning. Olayo (2005) has established low levels of participation in decision making among

staff in selected universities in Kenya which reduces employee work performance with regard to efficiency and effectiveness. Thus, ineffective involvement of staff in decision making was interpreted as impacting negatively on the quality of services offered by the lecturers in both private and public universities. Similarly, students' involvement in decision making is significantly different between private and public universities. It was interpreted that students' involvement in decision making was better in private universities compared to public universities. This largely explains why there have been more student riots in public universities as compared to private universities. According to K'Okul (2010), the riots were attributed mainly to misunderstanding between the students and the university authority and poor management followed by inadequate learning facilities and ineffective guidance and counselling services. Maina (2011) also found that colleges that keep students informed of the challenges that they face in providing services, candidly explaining any setbacks and how these are handled, give students an opportunity to experience management in action. Providing opportunities for students to manage their own affairs within the constraints of available resources offers useful experiences for personal development and self discovery. Opportunities to organize events, participate in student leadership and others, whether successfully or otherwise, build resilience, autonomy and confidence, and enhance independence and effectuation behaviour. Inadequate involvement of staff and students in decision making have impacted negatively on the quality of teaching and learning in public universities and, to some extent, in private universities (Gudo, Oanda and Olel 2011).

Appointments and promotions within the public universities is another very contentious area. The promotion criterion was viewed as unnecessarily inflexible, with an overemphasis on chronological teaching duration over a number of years and refereed publications in international journals as well as obscure criteria which are hardly made public, especially by the top leadership. The cumulative effect of these problems is to undermine the quality of service delivery, as do various counter-reactions from staff, such as 'moonlighting' (engaging in extra income-generating activities), the use of old teaching notes, zero research-based teaching and learning, a lack of commitment in the mentoring of students, low morale and others (Waswa and Katana 2008). As noted in a very recent contribution by a senior academic in one of the public universities:

…A good number of us in the university know the rot within, but have elected either to remain silent or join the rot. The process of recruitment of academic staff in some of our universities has been abused to the point where interviews are held to justify already decided appointments. Why is it that someone is recruited into the university academic staff without submitting a CV for scrutiny among staff and students? Future appointments to university academic staff must require applicants to present a seminar paper before staff, students and interested public. Promotions are another area where consistency is lacking. We have colleagues in the university who have been promoted to senior positions, but whose CVs do not show a record of serious research and publications. A lecturer whose CV lists newspaper articles as publications is an embarrassment. When you have senior lecturers whose CVs do not have at least five peer-reviewed book chapters/ journal articles, it must be asked who in the university leadership promoted them. The process of aligning university education to the new constitution must clean up university management, streamline management structures and weed out scholars who are surviving through patronage. We owe this to our students (Murunga 2012).

The current state of university governance and management in public universities was also supported by the recent Public Universities Inspection Board, which noted that current Acts of Parliament providing for the establishment, governance and management of public universities, and the government regulatory dimension brought in by the state corporations Act are inconsistent with the needs of modern management and good governance practices. Further, in order to accommodate change, enhance creativity and innovation, and increase democratic space and representation of all stakeholders, it is recommended that councils embrace staff unionisation and allow them to flourish and function in partnership with other university governance units (Republic of Kenya 2006).

Conclusion

Unlike in other contexts, such as the corporate sector, governance in higher education is quite diffuse and entails shared responsibilities among a variety of stakeholders. Accordingly, the biggest challenge in governance within the university sector relates to issues of power and responsibilities as dealt with by councils, the university leadership, senior administrators, academics, staff, students, policy makers and other external stakeholders. The core principles that are usually in contestation in this interplay of power are institutional autonomy and academic freedom, which are often defended as necessary to safeguard the mission of the institution and to buffer it against external

interference, on the one hand, and challenged in the interest of transparency and accountability, on the other hand. Successful management of this tension is critical for institutional success and the building of trust and partnership among all the stakeholders.

To address the many challenges being faced by higher education in Kenya and other African countries,innovative organizational and leadership approaches are required which have to tap into the individual and collective stakeholder creativities and competencies in pursuit of core university functions. Increased democratisation and participatory decision-making, based on mutual gains among the university system components, will need to be researched and utilized. Partnership and participation should be the hallmarks of good governance and not autocratic leaderships that have been prevalent in most of the Kenyan public universities for decades. Power to make decisions should be devolved to operational units such as faculties, institutes and departments. These operational units should be strengthened to enable them to discharge their functions effectively. The recruitment of deans, directors of institutes, heads of departments, administrators and managers for the operational units should be done competitively at all levels and remuneration pegged to competence and performance. It is also important that clear and fair promotion policies, designed along a bottom-up approach, namely, assessment from a relevant department to a final University Promotions Committee, would add credibility to the decisions in this regard as well as make public the promotion criteria.

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