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MISR Views on the National Discussion on Makerere University

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MISR Views on the National Discussion on Makerere University

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1. The problem of staff and student activism are a tip of an iceberg

I am pleased to contribute to the discussion of the causes of student and staff activism resulting in strikes at Makerere. I do believe, however, that what we are seeing are symptoms or tips of icebergs of larger problems beneath Uganda's higher education sub-sector. The nation's higher education system needs thorough rethinking. I regard Inquiry Committees sent to fire fight striking university social groups as Band-Aid treatments. I have been on two of such Committees (McGregor and F. Mbaguta's) and I know that the whole edifice of higher education in this country needs a thorough surgery, a comprehensive review and repackaging in order to bring peace to the sub-sector and deliver proper education. To understand what is happening at Makerere, therefore, we need to study and review the whole higher education delivery system in this country. I would like Makerere to be a first class training, research and innovating university, which is institutionally free but accountable to the public and serving the public good. I would like it to be a university that fulfils its multiple functions of knowledge production, disseminating that knowledge, helping to apply such a knowledge in society, intellectually skilling the next generation of Ugandans and contributing to the global stock of knowledge. Surveying the whole higher education system may not be part of the mandate of this committee but you can point out this matter as it is crucial. A thorough review of higher education to inform a national dialogue to discuss the nature of the university this country needs, its linkage to production, government, other sectors of education and the general society should therefore be done. It is important to discuss the nature of the university that will help the country produce the necessary knowledge

and human resources who can contribute to the realization of our development plans while at the same time linked to the global knowledge production processes. Information obtained in such a survey should help to inform us the best type of university Makerere should be in the coming years.

For me, the Humboltian model of a university, which combines research and teaching in the context of institution autonomy based on social responsibility and financially supported by the state, seems to be the most relevant university for African countries. Such a model has internal mechanisms to absorb causes of activisms and strikes. The most ranked universities in the world exhibit characteristics of this model. Most Anglophone African universities, however, especially those established as a result of the Asquith report (of 1945) have followed the Oxbridge collegiate system of emphasising teaching in an atmosphere of collegiality. In this model, research is praised and often rewarded but is sometimes not regarded as the most important criteria for employment, promotion and tenure. As a result, few of these institutions **are engines of development for their nations**, which we would like Makerere to be. The American research university is private but publically driven in the way it is financed but its emphasis on complete autonomy may not be acceptable to African politicians. The French model of state driven institutions seems to attract few followers, as its governance model is outmoded for the 21st. Uganda must therefore, this time, survey, its higher education system and define the roles and type of university it needs to have if our universities are to stabilise and become engines of development.

2. The governance model of the public university system is faulty.

The most popularly held view is that underfunding is the major problem of Makerere University. This is only partly true. The major cause of many more problems, including underfunding, is the governance model this country is using to manage its public university system. Unless the governance model is addressed, the public university system will not stabilize. The current governance model, including the state at the apex followed by university councils, senates, university managers, academic and administrative staff and students in that order, is partly to blame for the qualitative stagnation of the public university in Uganda and the root of staff and student activisms and strikes. Although the University and

Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001 improved the lot of public universities, components relating to the finances of public universities of the 1970 Makerere Act were not changed and the Government has control of public university finances. Due to this financial linkage, staff and students think, and perceive, that the government is, or should be, responsible for all the expenditures and financial shortfalls of public universities. In short, the model creates, the impression and perception that the Government owns and is in charge of the university and striking is, to many activists, aimed at the owner, that is Government. In a number of cases, political motives reinforce other issues to energise staff and student strikes. Indeed, studies show that strikes in universities often have political motives. According to Philip Altbach, “student movements emerge from their own social and political environments” where the university is located (Altbach, 1984). Byaruhanga’s impressive study of student activism and strikes at Makerere between 1952 and 2005 indicates that 40% of student strikes in that institution were either motivated by politics or included political motives (Byaruhanga, 2006). My study of the 1952 Makerere Strike comes to the same conclusion (Kasozi, 2015). A study by Florence Nakayiwa indicated that striking staff partly aim their arrows at Government (2016). In Third World countries, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, students often aimed not only at changing the structures of their education institutions and those of the state but also, in number cases, the incumbent government (Ayu, 1986; Nkinyagi, 1991; Bako, 1994, Al-Zubeir, 1995; Kamotho, 2000; Wekesa, 2000; Munene, 2003; Zeiling and Dawson, 2008).

By using the current model of governance to finance and manage public universities, the state is reinforcing the perception that since universities are considered “government institutions”, the government is directly responsible for solving their financial problems. Although universities must respond to both national and internal forces, the current governance model manages the university as a parastatal body, which does not respond to external forces such as rankings, competition for international research funding, attraction and retention good staff and students. The current model is therefore most inappropriate in the financing of universities in the digitally driven global age where universities play a key role in development.

3. The financial linkage of the university to the state

The existing governance model involves direct linkage of the public university to the Government through the Treasury and Ministry of Education. International best practice of financing universities consists in state transfers of grants to universities through medium bodies with accountability conditions attached. In this way, universities are not subjected to Government civil service bureaucratic laws and the Government is saved the irritations of being seen as directly responsible for the finances of public universities. Usually, elaborate agreements between universities and the Government are signed to determine their relations. In Kenya and Tanzania, these are in the form of charters and all universities, private or public, in these two sister countries must be chartered. Uganda is still lagging behind in this respect.

Although most of Makerere's money is privately obtained, its financial relationship with the state has remained the same since 1970. Although government financial contributions to the running of Makerere declined from 100% in the 1980s to an average of 40% from the early 2000s to the present, the financial governance of the University did not change to reflect the shift. The current model permits the financial control of public universities by the state to a level where the latter determines areas and levels of university financial policy and expenditure. Having privatized major parts of the public university system, the state should have completed this exercise and granted these institutions autonomy to manage their finances. For example, Makerere has been increasingly getting private since 1992/3 and applying neoliberal practices while being controlled by the state (Table 1). The state should only have put conditions on funds remitted from government sources but leave these institutions to own and manage funds from other sources as they see fit. But the state insists that all funds of public universities belong to the Consolidated Fund and the Government could recall any surplus from the University, like any other Government institution. To seal the Government university linkage, public service regulations and laws governing personnel such as the Pension Act are made applicable to university staff. Universities are not only national but also international institutions. Laws governing their behavior should respond to their dual nature. Recently, the Auditor General was reported to have suggested that any foreign donations should be reported, and where possible sent to the Consolidated Fund and then remitted to

the University. Putting grants and foreign donor money into the Consolidated funds will block this line of funding, as it did for Makerere from 1970 to the time a new act was enacted in 2001. However, the institution must be accountable to the public and the Auditor General should continue to audit its accounts—and if possible—the academic processes of the University. Within universities, there is a lot of work to do. University councils should have more authority on financial affairs as the MacGregor report recommended. Senates should have final say on all academic matters and funds for academic activities. The following parts of the ACT are some of the sections that reinforce the current model, which enables the Government to retain ultimate control of public universities. These should be amended or eliminated if a new act is not enacted. These include:

- i. The Amendment Act, Section 6A, which gives government a freehand to intervene in university matters whenever it feels like it. With enlightened leadership, this section may be harmless but can be misused by unwise leaders.
- ii. Section 62(3), which forbid public universities to spend any money not approved by parliament.
- iii. Experience has shown that public universities cannot fix levels of fees. Although under section 41c, a university council has powers to “fix scales of fees and boarding charges”, Makerere council’s attempts to increase fees in 2004/5 and subsequent years were halted by government.
- iv. Section 59(5) of the Act does not give public universities the right to invest any of their funds without approval of the minister.
- v. Section 44(4) of the Public Finance and Accountability Regulations, which allows Government treasury to ask public universities to remit to the government monies, collected at source.
- vi. Like the civil service, public universities must use *the single-spine* structure when paying staff. This is very strange, as universities recruit academic staff globally, and often employ many foreign workers who cannot be fitted into a country specific structure such as Uganda’s. Forcing academics to adhere to civil service structures not only excludes good non-Ugandan staff but increases the temptation for marketable Ugan-

- dans to seek jobs elsewhere – and many have done so.
- vii. Under the Pension Act, academics in public universities must retire at 60 years of age. As a result, universities lose the very seasoned academics they need to supervise and mentor the next generation of researchers and professionals. Globally, academics are paid for the vibrancy of their contribution to knowledge not their age.
 - viii. Areas of sections 31 to 34 of the law which disempower the Vice Chancellor and blur the responsibilities of top officials should also be amended.

Both Tanzania in 2005 and Kenya in 2012 have passed University Acts to change the governance of universities to match changing global and local forces impacting on university roles in society and their management. What is painful to me is that the Uganda National Council for Higher Education participated in efforts of drafting our neighbours' law but Education officials in Uganda refused to amend ours. Roles of universities need defining and their governance brought in line with our neighbours if we are to avoid activism and strikes by various university groups.

4. Universities are not fulfilling their multiple roles

Due to the faulty governance model and underfunding, most of our universities are not fulfilling their multiple functions of knowledge production (through research, debate and other forms of innovation), advanced training, recruitment of social elites, and public service. Although there have been massive increases of student enrolment and number of universities, **the Ugandan university has not been transformed into an engine of development.** With the exception of science based faculties at Makerere and Mbarara, the Ugandan university has not added much to new knowledge for resolving national social problems in the last twenty years. It has remained a teaching institution. All we see are endless graduation ceremonies and wasteful graduation parties afterwards. Most of our universities are really glorified high schools teaching already known, and in most cases, imported knowledge. This may not be surprising since most of the universities in Uganda are funded to perform the teaching function of universities. Year after year, the NCHC publication, the *State of Higher Education and Training* has lamented the dearth of research in our univer-

sities. Even at Makerere, where there is a tradition of research, Musiige and Maassen (2015) found that in 2007, the ratio of academic production per staff to be 0.20 compared to 0.50 for South African universities. In a research of over twenty universities in the last two years, I found the average production ratio to be less than 0.1 for other institutions, Makerere and Mbarara excepted. Research output/production includes publications (hard and soft copies) in journals, books, the motion media, participation in critical public debates, obtaining patents and leadership in defining issues.

5. Funding of research

Much as a traditional campus based university is a complex multipurpose institution with many functions, research and knowledge production takes precedence over other roles. This is especially so in this knowledge driven global age. Institutional rankings, faculty promotions, grants and major donations are, in most of the world, based on research outputs. Although Uganda has many universities and many are proud to award certificates, diplomas, degrees and other terminal decorations, according to the surveys I have done, few of these institutions qualify to be called universities. They do not conduct research. **Yet universities are the major producers of knowledge and leaders of national innovation systems.** A recent study states that every state needs “a national research system which is composed of universities, the private sector, public and private centres” (Cloete and Maassen, 2015) to produce relevant knowledge to resolve social problems and participate in the larger global economy. As centres of research and producers of high level thinkers and workers, universities are the drivers of modern economic development.

The major obstacle to conducting research in our universities is insufficient funding of this critical function of these institutions. The underfunding of research is energized by a belief by many Ugandans that the major role of a university is to teach. Neither the universities nor the state seem to be interested in funding research and postgraduate studies. On average, Ugandan universities spend about 2% or less of their budget on research. According to Mamdani (2007), both the University (Makerere) and Government of Uganda suspended funding of research in 1993, and in 1994, Government “scrapped scholarships for graduate studies” Any money for postgraduate training was to be targeted to personnel needed

by the civil service. In the decade 2000 to 2010, Uganda's funding of public universities as a percentage of GDP averaged only about 0.3% compared to about 1.0% of Kenya and Tanzania and over 2.0% of the Asian giants in the same period. In research and development, the country's investment declined from 0.74 % in 2003 to 0.5% as a percentage of GDP. Foreign donors fund most of the critical research in Ugandan universities. It seems we have developed a perception that foreign donors are responsible for funding our knowledge production function of our universities. Musiige and Maassen (2015) wrote that in 2013, 80% of Makerere's \$85 million research funding came from foreign donors. There is nothing wrong in receiving money from foreign donors but dependence on this source for most of our funding is risky as such a source is not sustainable and is dependent on many fluctuating variables.

6. Loss of sight of the role and position of a university in society

To develop inclusive governance, and hopefully democratic model for universities, the key stakeholders must be clear of, and should have, a shared view of the role of universities in society and how they should be governed. By pressuring the Government to directly make their salaries part of Government expenditure payable by the treasury, academic staff in public universities are not enhancing the position of universities that enables the latter to properly play their proper roles in society. **Universities operate best when they are not hostile to, but free from, the state, their owners and the public.** To secure their institutional autonomy, universities should receive unconditional grants from external sources including the Government and account for that money to the public, government and other stakeholders. If staff are paid by the state, then universities, **which must respond to both national and international forces,** will be required to adhere to **government bureaucratic laws** like other national institutions. This will undermine university autonomy, university traditions and the freedom of staff to control their research and teaching agendas. What staff should demand is a change of the current university relationship with the Government as well as a change in the governance model through amending the act and the way public universities are funded. Such changes should increase options for universities to raise more resources. This has happened in Tanzania and Kenya where university acts have been enacted to spell out such relationships. Uganda is about

ten years behind in this field. But current staff action and the way they are pressuring the state to take over payment of their salaries will increase the linkage of public universities to the state. **In turn, this will affect the abilities of universities to fulfil their multiple functions as university income will be determined by government budgetary constraints, as is now the case.** They will become, like parastatal bodies, Government institutions responding to only local forces like high schools. Like Christopher Okigbo, **striking staff are betraying their own cause and the cause of universities by taking actions that might destroy the universality of our universities.**

7. The academic profession reduced to a mere teaching role

Due to underfunding, mismanagement and laziness on the part of university workers, most of Ugandan university instructors have been reduced to being mere teachers because they do not add to known knowledge. They therefore do not qualify to be members of the academic profession. They are teaching professionals. The Socratic and Humboldtian tradition emphasizes a synergy of research and teaching in a context of institution autonomy based on social responsibility and financial support by the state. Research energises teaching as real academics share their findings with students who are, in many cases, more amazed by original rather than copied or plagiarized ideas. Student participation and involvement in the search and refinement of knowledge improves learning, teaching and production of knowledge. The combination of those activities makes a university a real community of learners, a “*universitas*”, whose aim is the search, refinement and transmission of knowledge.

8. The creation of thinkers and the next generation of academics undermined

Lack of research funding has not only reduced the production of knowledge and reduced university academic staff to only a teaching role but has also negatively impacted on the creation of the next generation of academics and high-level thinkers for work in the general society. Indeed, in this global technical age, a major role of the university is to produce elevated thinkers with versatile minds that can adjust to changing market, political, social and adverse international forces. The country does not only need more qualified university staff but also well trained researchers to perform the triple functions of knowledge production, its dissemina-

tion and proper application in society. The people who perform these triple functions are, in most cases, PhD holders. The PhD holders constitute the core of the academic and research communities in both universities and the general society. PhD holders undertake research, the creation of the next generation of academics and help in the application of researched knowledge in society. Researchers and innovators are linked and doctorate holders are needed to do both. PhD holders are key in executing tasks that need high level thinking power. The number of PhD holders in the country is so low that it is wishful thinking that the country can be transformed into a modern society by 2040 as the official plan would make us believe. The research I have done for the last two years has told me that there is an alarming shortage of PhD holders who should constitute the core of research communities in societies. This shortage cannot be bridged in the next one hundred years if current production rates of only 200 of these individuals a year are not accelerated. Surveys indicate that, currently, there are about 1,000 to 1,300 PhD holders. The most recent NCHE publication (2013/4) puts the number in higher education institutions at 1,096. In a population of 34 million people, the ratio is 1 PhD holder per 34000 people.

It is evident that these numbers are far below the country's needs in both the education sector and the rest of society. Uganda with about 250,000 higher education students, of whom more than 150000 are in universities, does not only have a low ratio of PhD staff to students, PhD training programmes are not well structured in our universities. Thus in 2011/2, the PhD to staff ratio was about 1:150, for universities and about 1:208 for the whole higher education sub-sector. None of Uganda's universities had the NCHE ideal of 60% staff with PhDs although Makerere with about 40% was moving towards that ideal.

The average percentage of PhD holders in each of Uganda's university was found to be 11.7% (NCS&T) and 11% (NCHE) of total staff. Assuming that all lecturers in universities are required to have a PhD, as Makerere has stipulated, the PhD deficit in the higher education sub-sector is alarming. In 2015, total enrolment for universities was 180,000 and other tertiary institutions 70,000. To achieve the NCHE ideal staff to student ratio of one PhD holder to fifteen students (1:15) in universities would need (180,000 divided by 15) or 12,000 PhD holders. But the current count of PhD holders is about 1,300 leaving a deficit of 10,700 individuals needed in university institutions alone. To fill the gap and eliminate this deficit, the

country needs to produce at least 1000 PhDs per year for the next ten to twelve years. Based on normal productive capacity of three PhD graduates per academic staff every five years (or 0.6 PhD per year), Uganda's current PhD production capacity is no more than two hundred and fifty (about 212) PhD graduates each year. The Actual production in 2014/5 when I carried out this research was 100 (one hundred) only. The dearth of academic qualified staff in our university system partly explains the commotions we are experiencing in the university sub-sector. Overloaded, underpaid in comparison to their international counterparts, and unable to perform their preferred functions, a number of staff are pushed to the limits.

It is true, at lower levels of the higher education system the curriculum should be market driven and we may not need PhD holders in that area. But rigidity of the mind and training can be catastrophic because when markets change our trainees may not be able to change or use their skills.

9. Where then should the money come from?

A new model of funding that draws resources from multiple sources in the context of autonomy and accountability must be adopted. This is because neither the state, nor the parents, nor the non-government organisations, nor foreign donors, nor students nor other well wishers can individually fund universities. But a combination of all these sources can. **However, this can only happen when a new model of governance, or a new relationship with the Government, is established.** I think universities should renegotiate with the government for a new relationship, most preferably through the granting of charters as have happened in Tanzania and Kenya. Each public university should, like private ones, get a charter or an agreement specifying its relationship with the government, and the obligations of the state and the institution to the public. In this way institutions will be able to search for the truth unhindered by bureaucratic and Government red tape. Further, government should only give grants to universities through a central body, where all funds going to universities will be collected and disbursed on priority basis to each individual university. We should learn from Ghana, UK and Tanzania on this issue where such a system is working. No funds should be directly transferred from the treasury to universities because the latter might be tied to government regulations and red tape.

The following funding model suggests a system of funding universities that is not dissimilar to what obtained before the dictatorial 1970 Makerere Act was put in place. The following is my model (Figure 1):

Figure 1: A proposed diversified funding model for Uganda public universities

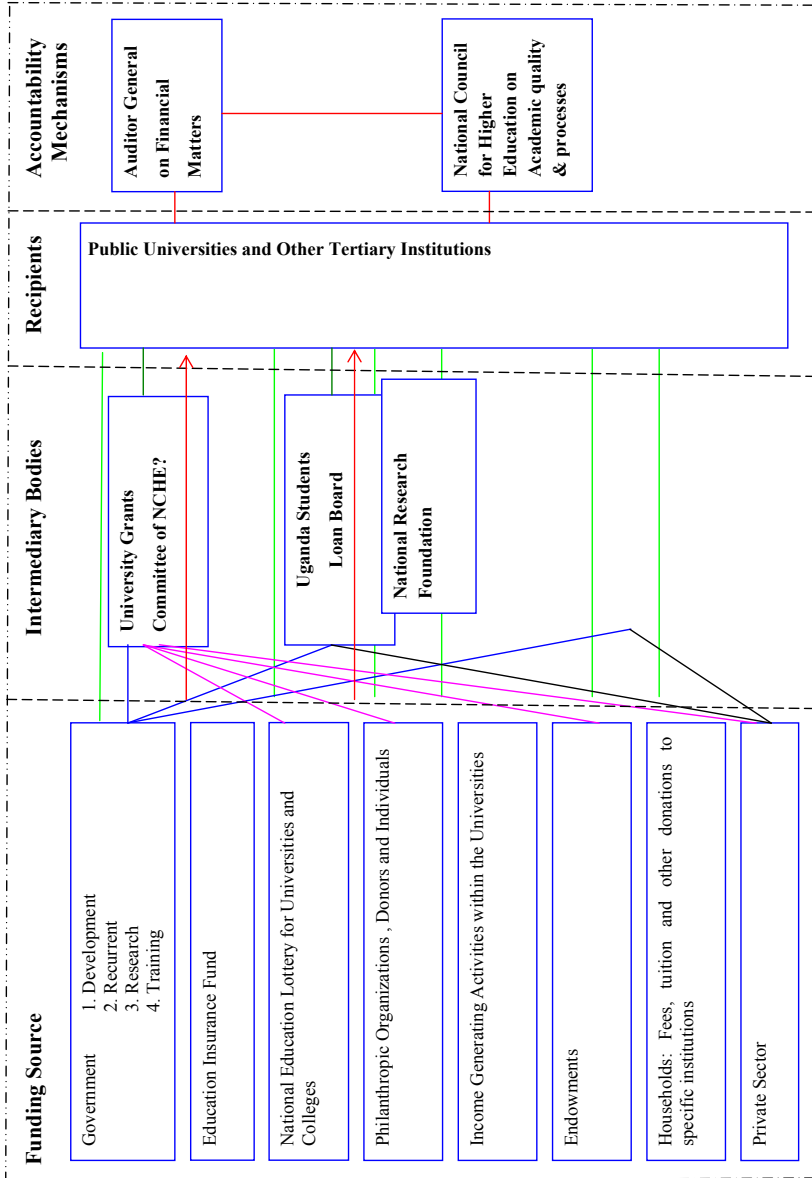


Table 1: Public and Private (Student) contribution to the funding of Makerere University, 1993-2005/6

Year	Govt Students	Total Govt Funding	% Govt of total funding	Private Students	Total Private funding	% Private of total funding	Total funding from both sources	Total students	% Annual Growth rate	Makerere unit income per student	Preferred Unit cost per student
1993/94	6,643	10,713,005,331	100	701		0	10,713,005,331	7,344	5.0		2,439,555
1994/95	6,494	17,660,738,900	100	1,412		0	17,660,738,900	7,906	7.7		2,567,953
1995/96	7,089	20,328,433,000	83	2,280	4,080,059,201	17	24,408,492,201	9,369	18.5	2,605,240	2,703,108
1996/97	6,710	19,255,308,734	72	7,902	7,561,493,114	28	26,816,801,848	14,612	56.0	1,835,259	2,845,377
1997/98	6,890	19,500,000,000	69	7,477	8,799,261,213	31	28,299,261,213	14,367	-1.7	1,969,740	2,995,134
1998/99	6,545	22,541,938,000	62	9,497	13,663,196,178	38	36,205,134,178	16,042	11.7	2,256,897	3,152,762
1999/00	6,103	22,990,000,000	60	14,265	15,080,261,764	40	38,070,261,764	20,368	27.0	1,869,121	3,318,697
2000/01	6,133	22,060,000,000	56	19,112	17,406,254,325	44	39,466,254,325	25,245	23.9	1,563,330	3,493,365
2001/02	7,712	26,650,000,000	58	22,650	19,030,439,000	42	45,680,439,000	30,226	19.7	1,511,296	3,677,226
2002/03	7,932	26,260,000,000	47	22,276	29,438,099,000	53	55,698,099,000	30,208	-0.1	1,843,819	3,870,764
2003/04	7,772	26,289,000,000	45	19,454	31,981,937,218	55	58,270,937,218	27,932	-7.5	2,086,171	
2004/05	6,799	28,874,000,000	43	23,906	38,579,239,386	57	67,453,239,386	30,705	9.9	2,196,816	
2005/06	6,948	38,472,472,000	41	23,879	56,181,463,787	59	94,653,935,787	30,827	0.4	3,070,488	

Note: External donor funding money is not included in the above table but it is regarded as "private".

Source: Computed by author from data obtained from the Academic Registrar, Bursar and Director of Planning,

10. Makerere University should gradually focus on postgraduate training

To avoid the danger of turning out half-baked PhD holders from multiple and insignificant high school like institutions calling themselves universities, the country should develop the only institution with some research and postgraduate training capacity, Makerere University, to train PhD holders. Makerere University should gradually focus on postgraduate training to produce academics for the many mushrooming higher education institutions, the public and private sectors. The average PhD stock in each of our university, though moonlighting and consultancy involvement reduce their institutional effectiveness, is only 12% instead of the 60% NCHE regards as ideal. Only Makerere has over 40% of staff with PhDs. According to a number of studies, every developing country needs at least one first class research and postgraduate training university (Altbach, 2013; Cloete and Maassen, 2015). Makerere is in position to focus on research and postgraduate training and it is in the country's interest that it does so. Its undergraduate programmes should gradually be trimmed to accommodate more postgraduate students. Mbarara University of Science and Technology and, possibly, Uganda Christian University, Uganda Martyrs and IUIU could follow the same road as Makerere, a number of years down the road. But their capacity in terms of staff, infrastructure and global connections are still very far behind Makerere. While we have some idea of the number of PhD holders' education institutions need, I am not clear of what the rest of the Uganda market needs. The National Planning Authority should embark on a study to provide the country with that necessary data. All I know is that the country needs these qualified individuals to constitute a thinking core for all high level activities. Unless a solution to the PhD holder deficit is resolved, the whole of Uganda's higher education sub-sector will fall into disrepute and the country will not achieve its development goals.

11. Conclusions

- i) The whole of the Uganda higher education sub-sector must be studied in order to fully understand what is going on at Makerere. The staff strike at Makerere is a tip of an iceberg of problems within the system that could destroy our whole university sub-sector unless addressed.

- ii) Staff and student strikes are energized by political motives due to the perception that Government is responsible for the financing and management of universities and it is deliberately denying universities money while it is funding what university groups see as not worth subsidizing. Their perceptions are reinforced by the state's use of a model of university governance that links the university to the state as a national institution in total disregard of the dual national and international nature of universities. To reduce strikes, the government must delink the university from the state, charter all public universities, transfer funding to universities through a grants committee (e.g. Pakistan) or through a national quality control agency like the NCHE (e.g. Ghana, Tanzania, Ireland etc.). In this model, university managers take on full responsibilities of maintaining the university and the Government is relieved of constant irritations from university communities. In turn, the University acquires more autonomy and responsibilities to manage its affairs or die. Currently, the method Uganda uses to fund universities is the most backward in the region.
- iii) To introduce a new model, a new act must be drafted, most preferably after a thorough study of the higher education sub-sector followed by a national dialogue on the type of university this nation needs. Merely drafting an Act without massive consultations might result into the mess we have with the current one.
- iv) Having revised the Act, Makerere and other public universities should renegotiate their relationship with the Government and enshrine that agreement in a charter. That is, each public university should be chartered as is the case in Kenya and Tanzania. From then on, staff and student strikes for resources will be aimed at university authorities not Government. Chartered, Makerere should stabilize to become an engine of development for Uganda and the region.

- v) The proposed funding model, which was published in my book (Kasozi, 2009), is the most appropriate for this country. If used, universities should stabilize their sources of revenue and hopefully we should have fewer strikes, as Government will no longer be the target of staff and students' pressure for more funds. Archaic methods of funding our public universities based on a law that makes universities solely national instead of both national and universal institutions is the author of the current financial problems of universities. Uganda should take a leaf of how Ghana funds its universities.

- vi) To improve on the qualifications of University staff whose PhD stock stands at 12% per university institution instead of the NCHE ideal of 60%, Makerere University should gradually focus on teaching postgraduate students at a ratio of 40% postgraduates to 60% undergraduates within the next five years to create more PhD holders. This will enable the country to fill the PhD deficit and create the next generation of academics and high skilled thinkers the nation needs.

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The Makerere Crisis: Time for a Radical Rethink

Mahmood Mamdani

Makerere University has closed again. The decision has come from the President of Uganda with no indication as to when the university will reopen. This is an opportunity to take a comprehensive look at the recurrent problem that has been Makerere. This means going beyond pointing fingers at individuals to making an overall evaluation of the problem.

The Makerere problem has grown acute over the past three NRM decades. Its dimensions are both structural, arising from the long term policy framework, and short term, stemming from bad leadership.

The policy framework, which was set in place towards the end of the 1980s by the World Bank, is based on three assumptions.

One, that the colonial education system had been elitist, and was kept going through constant state subsidies.

Two, that higher education is a business, and just as with any business, the consumer (the student's family) must pay the price of the product.

Three, the way to do this is to open the gates of the university to fee-paying students, so that additional revenue from fees can alleviate the financial burden on government.

Three decades of experience show that only the first assumption was right. The other two have made for the disaster we face today.

The World Bank Orthodoxy

In the 1980s, the World Bank argued that higher education is a business. Like with any business, investment in higher education has to be justified through a cost-benefit analysis.

The Bank did a simple exercise: it divided annual investment in different levels of education – primary, secondary and tertiary – by the number of students admitted, and arrived at cost per graduate for each level. The Bank then concluded that returns on investment are highest in pri-

mary education but lowest in university education so investment should prioritize primary education.

As government policy followed World Bank guidelines, universities were starved of funds. According to work done by Professor Kasozi at MISR, government contribution to Makerere's budget declined from 100% in 1993/94 to only 41% in 2005. Whereas Kenya and Tanzania spent 1% and 0.9% of the GDP respectively on public universities in the decade from 1997/98 to 2007/08, Uganda spent a mere 0.35% over that same period.

How the World Bank Redesigned Makerere University

The World Bank took hold of the policy-making apparatus at Makerere in the late 1980s and put into place a reform program over the next 15 years. I spent two years assessing the results of that reform, and wrote a book titled *Scholars in the Marketplace* (2007). Here are some key findings.

The Bank called for an increased intake of fee-paying students in all faculties. The number of students admitted to Makerere exploded, from 2,186 in 1992/93 to 10,666 in 2003/04. The expansion of numbers was the greatest in the Faculty of Arts and then the Social Sciences.

My *first* finding was that the research culture survived where student growth was moderate, which was in the Sciences but was practically destroyed in the units where the private intake was the greatest. As the Humanities and Social sciences turned into teaching factories and consultancy units, they ceased to be sites for research.

My *second* finding was that leadership made a difference, explaining significant differences between faculties at Makerere. Whereas the then Vice Chancellor and Dean of Arts were faithful disciples of the World Bank, the Dean of the Faculty of Sciences, insisted that science education could not proceed without laboratory space which was limited. As the Arts and the Social Sciences admitted more private students, classes ballooned in size, and more and more were held at the same time, leading to student demands that lecturers hand out typed notes. Overall, standards declined.

My *third* finding was that research institutions in the social sciences, such as MISR, had degenerated into consultancy units. In a consultancy, the client formulates the question; in research, that prerogative belongs to the researcher. Research is all about getting the question right. Like in medicine, the real challenge is diagnosis. If the diagnosis is right,

prescription follows.

The problem was made worse in the short run by bad leadership. The latest example of that leadership was the authorities' response to the 2013 strike in which the staff asked for a doubling of salaries. The university authorities agreed to a supplement – called 'incentive' – which was to be 70% of salary. Why call it 'incentive' and not an increase in salary? Because everyone was aware from the outset that this increase was not likely to be sustainable, even in the short run.

The university paid for the 'incentive' in part by slashing budgets of units: in only two years, the MISR budget was slashed by three-quarters! I doubt MISR was an exception. In other words, the university increased payment to individual staff but cut funding that would allow this same staff the means (paper, books, services, workshops, etc.) to function adequately.

The combination of a faulty policy framework and bad leadership has driven us into a series of crises, each worse than the previous one. If we respond to the crisis merely by calling for a change of leadership but without a review of the policy matrix, we will have failed.

Rethinking the Policy Framework

The basic challenge lies in our conception of the university. A university is less like a business enterprise, more like an infrastructure, say a road, or a power station. You do not measure the returns on a power station by dividing the investment with the numbers employed at the station. Or the returns on a road or a bridge by dividing the investment with numbers employed, not even with the traffic on it.

That the university is not just an economic unit means that its returns are not just economic, quantitative, measurable – they are also social, qualitative, not always available for measurement. It is not just commodities, goods and services that move on roads or across bridges. Ideas travel, horizons broaden, previously isolated regions are integrated, established views are challenged – notions of community and the world change. The biggest returns are in the realm of ideas.

The present crisis presents us an opportunity to rethink not just Makerere but the higher education system as a whole. This should lead us to question key assumptions in the existing model.

One, an intake of more students does not mean more money, but a larger deficit simply because fees do not cover the cost of educating a student. According to the Senate study, private student fees cover less than 50% of the cost of educating a student – regardless of the program.

Second, fees cannot be increased limitlessly to cover this deficit. Unless we are to return to the same old elitist system, we need to set fees with two considerations in mind: the cost of education, AND the capacity of parents to pay these fees. If not for reasons of equity, then for political reasons, the NRM government will not be able to lift the ceiling on fees.

Three, the way forward lies not in increasing but *decreasing* the student intake at Makerere in the context of rethinking Makerere's role in the higher education system as a whole.

A Redefined Role for Makerere

Makerere is no longer the sole university in the country. It is part of a university system. The challenge is to re-think the higher education system as an integrated whole.

Let us learn from the experience of the World Bank which had lost sight of the big picture and looked at primary, secondary and higher education as if each were an isolated island. In the process, it lost sight of the relations between different levels of education, and forgot to ask questions like: Who will train teachers? Who will produce the curriculum, one that will respond to the needs of society, the demand for citizenship, the need to think of a future in a rapidly changing world?

The rapid growth in the number of universities in Uganda has created an acute scarcity of qualified lecturers. This is part of a larger scarcity of qualified staff with research skills, whether in government or business or the non-profit sector. Only Makerere has the experience and the capacity to carry out the necessary high level training.

To do so, Makerere will need to be transformed from a mainly undergraduate to a mainly graduate university, from a mainly instructional to a research university. This will require a radical change: reduce the number of students at Makerere and change the ratio between undergraduates and graduates. This change can be achieved gradually over the next three years by simply reducing the undergraduate intake each successive year.

The result will be to redesign Makerere as a research university where post-graduates form a majority of the student body. Scarce re-

sources need to be invested in improving the quality of research and of our graduates, knowing fully well that graduates with MA and doctoral qualifications are greatly needed in the country.

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29. A.B.K. Kasozi, Mahmood Mamdani, *MISR Views on the National Discussion on Makerere University*, December 2016