



Editorial

Vice chancellors should be appointed, not elected

OVER the years, Kyambogo University's management has been characterised with intrigue, mistrust, incompetence and abuse of office.

One cannot confidently argue that all the vice chancellors who have been appointed in this university are bad administrators. As Prof. Abdu Kasozi, who is well-versed with higher education issues, says, Kyambogo is a failing institution.

It is clear there is so much politicking in public universities; all rooted in the process vice chancellors get into office.

There is need for direct appointments of the vice chancellor in public universities. This would be a shift from the current system where the vice chancellors are voted in the university's Senate and later Council, before a name(s)

is forwarded to the chancellor for appointment.

However, it seems, even with the change of office bearers, there will always be bickering in universities, until the issue is conclusively resolved, the reason why this law has to be revisited.

The University and Tertiary Institutions Act was enacted in 2001. It was amended in 2003 and later in 2006, to fill the gaps that had been identified at the time. Despite the amendments, public universities are not moving on smoothly, due to inadequacies in the law.

Since the law on universities is still being amended, it is important to pay attention to the issue of appointing vice chancellors. Let us not politicise education.

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Merging Kyambogo was a mistake



Prof. Kasozi

Kyambogo University is one of the institutions that have failed to stabilise. Shallow "experts" have recommended changes of leadership as a solution. But despite the changes from Prof. Lutalo-Bbosa, Prof. Omolo Ndiege and Prof. Opuda Asibo, the problems remain. Court has ordered the reinstatement of Prof. Ndiege; months after he was kicked out by the University Council.

I still believe the marriage of the three institutions namely the Institute of Teacher Education, Kyambogo (ITEK), the Uganda Polytechnic, Kyambogo (UPK) and the Uganda National Institute of Special Education (UNISE) that formed Kyambogo University in 2003 was rushed and, therefore, should be reversed. The partners were very different in nature and could not make a harmonious family within one entity. The relationship should be dissolved.

However, since its creation, the university has failed to integrate into a consolidated institution for the following reasons;

- Each of the former units had its separate vision and social niche that could not easily be accommodated or absorbed by another. As a result, the new university failed to refine and consolidate into a single shared vision and mission to bind the three former units into a single institution with a common purpose.
- Having been administratively brought into one basket, each could not follow its former mission appropriately since the merger meant the death of the old constituent institutions.
- As a result, each lost its former niche in the market while the new institution did not have the internal strength and the capacity to focus on even one of the services each of the merged institutions was famous for, that is, the production of high level technicians from UPK, specialists in special education from UNISE, and excellent lower secondary school teachers from ITEK).

The Visitation to Public Universities Committee of 2006-7 (the McGregor Committee) advised the Government to either disaggregate the university back to its former institutions or to allow for a much slower



Students celebrating Prof. Ndiege's (wearing hat) re-instatement as Kyambogo vice chancellor. Photo by Nicholas Oneal

merger by loosening the current centralised union bonds and making the institution a federal one. That is, to devolve more autonomy to each of the four institutions and let the merger take longer to accomplish. But the Government refused.

A monitoring visit commissioned by the NCHE under Rev. Dr. Michael Senyimba, the Ndejje University vice chancellor, from May 16 to 18, 2011, found that the university had no niche in society; had no direction and its workers were occupied mainly in the struggle to access institutional resources rather than the advancement or transmitting of knowledge.

One of my major difficulties in the period of 2003-2012 when I was the NCHE executive director was my inability to convince the Government to redesign Kyambogo University as per the Mc Gregor report. In meetings and in contacts with top officials, I expressed the view that as structured, Kyambogo University lacked common binding bonds, vision and purpose, and therefore, could not serve the public good.

It is my conviction that the various units that make up Kyambogo University can perform best if more financial, governance and curricula powers are devolved to them.

Kyambogo University should be disaggregated into a federal institution where the various units are as independent and focused as the colleges at Cambridge, Oxford or the University of Toronto.

This way, each of the three institutions can fight to regain their visions, missions and niches in the market. If Makerere and Dar es Salaam have broken up into colleges, why not such a critical institution that contains what

used to be Uganda's best polytechnic?

As structured, Kyambogo is a failing institution. Its route to the grave can only be halted if those who made the decision to merge it can accept that the marriage is not working.

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Read detailed statement of Prof. Kasozi on our website: www.newvision.co.ug

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