



Reviving Makerere University to a Leading Institution for Academic Excellence in Africa



Synthesis Report of the Proceedings of The 3rd State of the Nation Platform

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List of Acronyms

ACM	Association for Computing Machinery
ACODE	Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment
BTVET	Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training
FM	Frequency Modulation
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers
MUASA	Makerere University Academic Staff Association
STON	State of the Nation
TTI	Think Tank Initiative

INTRODUCTION

Established in 1922 as a technical school, Makerere University is now one of the largest universities in eastern and central Africa with 20 faculties/institutes/schools offering not only day but also evening and external study programmes to a student body of more than 30,000 undergraduates and 3,000 postgraduates. It is also a centre of research.

In 1963, Makerere University College became the University of East Africa.^{1*} It became an independent national university in 1970 when the University of East Africa was split into three

independent universities: University of Nairobi, University of Dar es Salaam, and Makerere University.

Makerere was home to many post-independence African leaders, including late Ugandan president Milton Obote and late Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere. Former Tanzanian president Benjamin Mkapa and current Kenyan president Mwai Kibaki are also Makerere alumni.

In the years immediately after Uganda's independence, Makerere University was a focal point for the literary activity that was central to African

¹Background information adopted from Wikipedia.



Cover photo: Prof. Baryamureeba, Ag. Vice Chancellor Makerere University (standing) delivering his master plan to reposition Makerere University among the top African Universities while Onesmus Mugenyi (seated) analysing the master plan at the 3rd session of the State of the Nation platform on December 4, 2009.

nationalist culture. Some prominent writers, including Nuruddin Farah, Ali Mazrui, David Rubadiri, Okello Oculi, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, John Ruganda, Paul Theroux, V.S. Naipaul and Peter Nazareth, were at Makerere at one point in their writing and academic careers. In those days, Makerere Medical School conducted top-notch research.

However, the days when Makerere was admirably referred to as the Harvard of Africa are long gone. Makerere's decay dovetailed with the decline of the country starting in the early 1970s. But even when the country started to pick up in the late 1980s, structural adjustment policies ensured a cut in government funding. General poor management of the institution has only made the situation worse. The university is now characterised by numerous student and staff strikes and a decline in academic performance.

It appears, however, that Makerere can pick itself up. After all, no condition is permanent. Toward the end of 2009, Prof. Venansius Baryamureeba, a young computer scientist and dean of Makerere's Faculty of Computing and Information Technology, was named acting vice chancellor. On December 4, 2009, Prof. Baryamureeba presented his plan to revive Makerere at the third session of the State of the Nation platform.

He spoke about the need to streamline management practices through employing more open administrative systems and integrating the use of information and communication technologies in all university operations. This, he hopes, will allow Makerere to move into more systematic planning that will help raise money, improve the quality of teaching and research, enhance staff welfare, and once again raise the overall profile of the university.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Financial Performance

Financial performance is concerned with measuring the results of an organisation's policies and operations in monetary terms whereas financial management entails planning for the future of the organisation to ensure a positive cash flow. Makerere's financial management challenges come from a lack of control structures and systems as well as running the university not as a revenue-generating entity but rather as an expenditure entity. The university lacks a business plan and that implies that there is no clear direction for raising revenue. A strategic plan without a clear business plan is largely impossible to execute. There has been elastic recruitment of administrative staff at the centre, which continues to increase the wage bill. For several years, the university has run a deficit budget and has domestic arrears of three years of Shs26 billion. Also, processes in the university are extravagant and wasteful with too many administrators coupled with poor accounting by the staff in terms of who is doing what. Participants generally agreed with Prof. Baryamureeba's diagnosis. They added that decision-making at the university is too expensive because of too many allowances for the too many managerial committees that meet too many times. On top of this, there is inadequate transparency and accountability.

To improve financial performance, Prof. Baryamureeba said Makerere will have to reduce waste while at the same time being innovative in generating money. The acting vice chancellor's efficiency plan entails, among others, automating financial management to enable the enforcement of budget line performance and generation of financial information to ensure transparency. This in turn would lead to cutting the number of top management meetings to once a month from the present once a week. At 2,400 courses, curricula will be revised; and the 27 faculties collapsed into seven.

The university also has to increase on the amount of money it generates internally. To do so, it will launch university learning centres country wide to run certificate, diploma, and bachelor's degree programmes. Instead of erecting buildings, Makerere will rent space in order to manage costs. Campus FM will be revamped with two components – a commercial arm and a training arm. The university will also develop its idle land, renovate its houses in the upscale Kololo neighbourhood of Kampala and rent them out at market rates, appeal to alumni for donations, allow companies to advertise in form of screen savers on university computers, and get academic staff to research and publish more to raise the university's rankings and thereby attract more funding. Some truly innovative ideas

that Prof. Baryamureeba suggested include supporting incubation centres in things like software engineering and food science and technology to run as commercial businesses following the research and development model. There is also the idea of establishing a commercial zone at the main campus by renovating the existing structures so that spaces can be rented out to businesses such as banks, bookstores, telecoms, food and coffee shops.

Research and Knowledge Management

Research and knowledge management refers to processes and systems that facilitate research and innovations, knowledge dissemination and retention. The research process at Makerere is not adequately managed, which partly explains why much of the students' research work is lagging. Web-enabled research management tools are becoming very popular and the reason for their use is that they help research work to reach wider audiences and at the same time improve the visibility of the university.

Yet Makerere lacks these tools making it difficult to manage research processes. Google Scholar has millions of records on research and knowledge management but contains little from Makerere yet it is used in university rankings. The information on research being undertaken in the university and the level of funding is not known. The central administration only has infor-

mation on research funded by key development partners through institutional development programmes. Makerere has potential for a larger output of high quality research and publications but this is still limited by weak linkages with the private sector yet a lot of research elsewhere is funded by the private sector. There is also little initiative/ability to source for research funding, and limited publicity of research accomplishments and ongoing initiatives through the Web and Internet media.

Strategies for improvement, according to Prof. Baryamureeba, include developing an integrated system that will provide a central point of contact on research issues; encouraging staff to start websites (to carry information on their research and publications), something that will be integral to their appraisal; developing a project management system that will provide updated information on every project managed by Makerere; and ensuring that all scholarly work and reports are uploaded in Google Scholar and other important databases.

Participants, almost all of whom are Makerere alumni, said that their alma mater must be a leader in public debate. It needs to hire "rock star" academics as well as establish a public policy fellowship programme for some exceptional people who have worked in public life to serve as distinguished visiting fellows for a specified period. "They make a university a hotbed

for debate,” said a participant. The way things are today kimeeza has more robust debate than Makerere, suggested yet another participant. Indeed, when Makerere had star professors like Ali Mazrui (1960s), Samwiri Karugire and Mahmood Mamdani (1980s), debate raged on the Hill. The proposed establishment of the 15-million-dollar Makerere Mazruiana Project to host an East African Ali A. Mazrui Centre for Global Studies building, an Ali A. Mazrui Chair, and an Ali A. Mazrui Scholarship is a step in the right direction; so is the proposed Emmanuel Tumusiime-Mutebile Policy Centre, a think-tank. The imminent return of Prof. Mamdani (after sojourns at Cape Town and Columbia) to head the Makerere Institute of Social Research should be a positive sign that we may soon see more and better debate at Makerere. The sustenance of the recently re-introduced inaugural lectures for newly named professors is also critical for the advancement of high calibre discussions. Furthermore, Makerere is usefully thinking about becoming a major centre for scholarly conferences and to that end it is looking to form strategic alliances with major conference organisers and international accrediting bodies like ACM (Association for Computing Machinery) and IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, the world’s largest professional association for the advancement of technology).

Quality of Service Delivered

Quality of services delivered such as processing of documents especially academic papers (testimonials, transcripts, certificates), and payment of suppliers leaves a lot to be desired. Students and the wider public have repeatedly expressed their dissatisfaction with service delivery at Makerere. The university does not have service level agreements to act as benchmarks for service delivery. Registration of students is unnecessarily complicated. The quality of teaching and laboratory services is hampered by lack of state-of-the-art lecture theatres and laboratories. Most lecturers have no access to projectors and laptops. They still use chalk. They dictate notes in class instead of uploading them on online learning systems. Replies to communications within the university can take weeks or months. Service delivery is hampered by lack of supportive ICT systems and poor ICT integration; lack of the right calibre of staff to provide services; inadequate appraisal system; and poor information management. No one even seems to know the exact number of students enrolled at the university. Service delivery is also affected by lack of staff motivation and retention mechanisms.

To change things, the Baryamureeba Plan seeks to, among others, retrain staff; create a one-stop information centre (office), and an online information portal for providing information; automate service



Some of the core group members who are Makerere alumni share a light moment with Prof. Baryamureeba (holding an envelope) after the 3rd session of the State of the Nation Platform meeting at Protea Hotel in Kampala

delivery (including student payments, registration, and requests) so that paper work is reduced and the status can be monitored online; and develop a voice over the Internet system to enable savings on calls made within the university. All these aspects require ICT knowledge. There will, therefore, be a system for staff to acquire laptops/computers under a hire purchase scheme, and to get e-learning training. Students will be helped to own laptops under a student laptop loan scheme.

Participants, some of whom are graduate students at Makerere, said that their supervision is poor not necessarily because of lack of ICTs but simply because lecturers are teaching elsewhere to earn an extra shilling.

As a result, few of the graduate students complete studies within the required two years for the master's degree. Prof. Baryamureeba said some faculties do well while others do not. Besides, some students show up and do one year of the master's then get a good job and stop work on their degree programmes. "The university is not to blame entirely," the acting vice chancellor said. "But we are streamlining things. You remain inactive for six months, you go."

Management/Staff Relations

There is lack of appropriate relationship between management and staff with every side claiming superiority. There is no strategy to retain staff supported by the university to advance their careers.

Once these members of staff complete their studies there is no engagement to ensure that expectations on either side are adequately taken care of. The university lacks a reward and recognition mechanism for outstanding performance. There is a lot of intrigue at all levels. This is certainly detrimental to building a culture that is results-oriented. Dependency on the grapevine (rumour) is ripe largely because the flow of information from those who have it is extremely difficult. Recent academic staff strikes have been mainly due to lack of dialogue and trust between the academic staff association (MUASA) and the university management. On the other hand, the relationship between administrative staff and university management came to climax when the administrative staff took the University Council to court over a pay dispute.

Therefore, for every regular Council and Senate meetings, Prof. Baryamureeba suggested, statements from staff associations will be tabled for discussion as one of the ways to foster dialogue and understanding within the university. Also, chairpersons of staff associations will be invited to attend the end of the month management meetings; the vice chancellor will address staff at their general meetings so that his/ her address forms part of the discussion; there will be a reward and recognition policy for outstanding performance; plus introduction of an intrigue and conflict-resolution mechanism. One participant called

for the establishment within the university of SACCOS for staff welfare and retirement.

University/Student Relations

Student leaders feel that they do not have enough access to university managers at the various levels. Whenever there is dialogue with the university officials, however, the students feel that they are being lectured most of the time instead of being listened to. The Students Guild leadership has also persistently complained over lack of timely access to the money for Guild activities. Information on new policies affecting students gets to them late and at times the sensitisation is not adequate. There are also student concerns over lack of appropriate avenues to seek redress in case of complaints; lack of assurance mechanisms with regard to delivery of services; and inappropriate facilities to foster ideal learning.

Consequently, the Baryamureeba Plan seeks to ensure that Guild money is transferred as approved and in a timely manner. Also, for every regular Council and Senate meetings, a statement from the leadership of Makerere University Students Guild will be tabled for discussion; the Guild president will be invited to table a statement at the management meeting every month; and at every Guild Assembly, the vice chancellor or the deputy for academic affairs will address the Guild Representative Council (student parliament) so that the address forms

part of the discussion. Furthermore, the university intends to have modern hostels constructed on campus to check the continuing proliferation of usually sub-standard hostels around the university. And, in change of policy, the university will house only first-year students. As to the poorer (needy) students, the government is coming up with a loan scheme to help them pay their way through college.

University/Government Relations

Makerere University needs to reposition itself as a service provider to the government, according to the Baryamureeba Plan. Currently, engagement with the government is not strategic and this leaves a lot of gaps in managing relationships. There is need for a comprehensive framework defining the relationship between Makerere University and the government.

Going forward, the vice chancellor and other members of top management will regularly interact with ministers and technocrats especially in the ministries of education and finance; and the university will create a think tank to debate government policies so as to help inform government decisions. Engagement with the government may also have the benefit of the state funding more research work that is relevant to the country instead leaving much of the research to be funded by foreign philanthropic foundations such as Rockefeller.

Some caution is in order here. Makerere being a public university must necessarily engage with the government. The university must, however, guard against being a handmaiden of the state because such a relationship could easily compromise academic freedom. Said Prof. Baryamureeba: “The university needs to engage and network with government departments and ministries and be part and parcel [emphasis added] of the implementation of the government programmes.” That is a rather jarring statement coming from the head of any academic institution, least of all one of higher learning like Makerere.

University Image and Standing

The image and reputation of Makerere University have been greatly affected by negative media reports due mainly to poor service delivery and lack of information dissemination. The university lacks a public relations strategy and thus the engagement with the public is ad hoc. The university website, which is supposed to be the main source of information to the media and general public both locally and internationally, is never regularly updated and as a result Makerere University web ranking by Webometrics has been poor. Lack of timely and accurate information has also been interpreted as lack of transparency, which has contributed to the negative publicity. There is also the problem of poorly packaged information in form of annual reports

and newsletters. There is lack of impression management as well. For example, the main gate area is shabby, and the entrance to the Main Building and facilities therein are in an appalling state.

To spruce up Makerere's image, Prof. Baryamureeba suggested, among other changes, centralisation of all advertising and entering into conditional advertising contracts; strengthening the public and corporate relations function; using staff to promote and advertise the university; and issuing weekly press releases and briefs. In terms of impression management, the main entrance to the university will be reconstructed with better signage. The same goes for the main entrance to the Main Building. More gates will be constructed, and persons selling newspapers and the kiosks along University Road will be relocated. To check the forging of certificates that some participants decried, Prof. Baryamureeba said the university is contracting a new company that will issue certificates with watermarks and other security features. On sex-for-marks, the acting vice chancellor said the practice appears more common at the graduate level and that students mostly initiate it. "Now you are caught you leave the university, student or lecturer," Prof. Baryamureeba said. He added that every 10 students will have an advisor on academic and other affairs, including moral. The university would also do well for its image to encourage lecturers and students to engage in pro bono work

in the communities around Makerere and beyond. This would be in the tradition of the once famed Makerere Free Travelling Theatre of the 1960s that took theatre to the people all over the country and beyond and made the university quite popular among the public.

Governance

Governance relates to decisions that define expectations, grant power, or verify performance. In some faculties, departments operate as autonomous units without direction and supervision from the faculty dean. At university level there is hardly any direction or supervision of faculties by the vice chancellor and the deputy vice chancellors. Within the vice chancellor's office the roles of the vice chancellor and the deputy vice chancellors are not clear. Thus the key issues can be summarised as a very big administrative structure, inappropriate reporting lines, and lack of teamwork among top managers of the university.

There is, therefore, the need to develop internal reporting guidelines, amongst other strategies for change. All relevant Council and Senate decisions and policies shall be put on the intranet to be accessible by all authorised staff; deans will submit quarterly reports to top university management and this will be automated to enable ease of report generation; performance-based appraisal system will be institutionalised with key performance indicators forming the basis for appraisal.

SOME ISSUES TO PONDER

- Prof. Baryamureeba's plan to improve the state of affairs at Makerere University as presented is the plan of a solid manager, even leader. It is not the plan of a visionary and transformative leader of an institution that deals primarily with the generation and exchange of knowledge. It would have been useful to hear his view about the fundamental importance and role of the university in a developing country and what knowledge areas it should be going into in the world of today and that of tomorrow. This would have entailed addressing what the acting vice chancellor thinks are the emerging knowledge needs, if any, and how he plans to position Makerere to address those needs. It is the needs that the university seeks to meet that should define the management structure and infrastructure it should have. Possibly all Makerere seeks now is to improve its management and then focus on the fundamental needs at a later time.
- It is time Makerere and the government decided on what type of university Makerere should be primarily. An idea floated before suggests that Makerere should focus more research and graduate teaching. It should leave undergraduate teaching and training to other universities both public and private. It is a sensible idea worth considering because gone are the days when Makerere was the only university in the country that had to do everything.
- A related idea regards establishment of polytechnics to train diploma level professionals, the technicians as it were. Universities teach at higher theoretical levels and do research at similar levels but the country needs diploma holders as well to fix the nuts and bolts. The government's plan for BTJET (business, technical, vocational education and training) could be better focussed.
- Makerere is not known for anything in particular. Much as all Makerere programmes are not lousy, it would be very helpful for the university to have two or three top-notch centres of excellence known across Africa. Such centres – the Economic Policy Research Centre comes to mind – would attract star professors, star students, do quality research work, and thus attract more money and prestige to the university. This requires clear strategy and focus. Universities elsewhere do it. Makerere too can.
- In dealing with the private sector, the university should not limit itself to doing research that benefits the interests of the sector directly. It

should also lobby for the private sector's sponsorship of endowed chairs and professorships to research a wide range of issues.

- The university may want to consider seriously the revival of The Makererean newspaper and/or set up a campus news bureau that covers all manner of key developments at the university. These could range from key hires, retirements, and deaths to research breakthroughs. This would complement the outward strategy of reaching out to the media through regular news releases, and advertising from a central office.
- If Prof. Baryamureeba is serious about publishing by staff, and even

students, he should revamp the university press. He should seek to make the Makerere University Press a prestigious imprint on the continent by investing in quality editors and a quality press or enter into partnership with others who have quality presses.

- The Makerere University physical infrastructure is a great shame and things are getting worse, to be charitable. As a matter of urgency the university must set up a fully-fledged operation and maintenance department to keep the university running in some decent shape. Half-measures through existing units such as the estates department will not do.

ANNEX: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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About State of the Nation Platform

The State of the Nation platform is a national policy forum to promote upward and downward policy conversation on contemporary public policy and governance issues in Uganda. The platform brings together individual leaders and professionals in the public sector, the private sector, civil society, the media and other interest groups into a policy discourse on contemporary policy and governance issues in the country. As an innovation in policy outreach and communication, the platform is a hybrid of ACODE's breakfast dialogue format, interactive panel discussions and outreach through media. This policy outreach initiative has been conceived and is made possible with core funding support to ACODE provided under a grant from the Think Tank Initiative (TTI).

The State of the Nation platform as a policy dialogue fora is defined by five core features:

A core group of persons selected based on their professional backgrounds and achievement, public roles, active leadership in their social groups and interest in public policy and governance issues. Because of the individual influence and positions of its individual members, this core group acts as the brain trust of the State of the Nation platform and provide a policy feedback loop between citizens and policy makers.

Local Level Segment is an innovative elements of the State of the Nation platform as a strategy for downward and upward policy engagement. The district fora aims at localizing national policy debates and putting them into the local context.

Students Segment are organised to nurture and encourage a new generation of young leaders in the country, special segments of the State of the Nation Platform are from time to time organized targeting students and student leaders. Like the District segment of the platform, the students' segment are organized in the different parts of the country and attendance is by invitation.

All proceedings of the various State of the Nation platform are fully recorded. ACODE has entered into partnership with a number of media houses (TV and Radio) to ensure that the proceedings are broadcasted to a wider audience. In addition, the proceedings are also produced in the form of video and audio podcasts and loaded on the internet so that they can be accessed through ACODE and other partner websites.

The participants in the State of the Nation platform have been built into a citizens network linked through electronic media, in particular, e-mail, cell phone and shot message texts. Building on the lessons from previous policy campaigns, the participants are mobilized into a network of citizens exchanging views and ideas on contemporary public policy and governance issues, helping members leverage key policy and decision making centers to increase the impact of their work, and generating consensus on issues of national importance.



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