

Trails in Academic and Administrative Leadership in Kenya

This book is a product of the CODESRIA Higher Education Leadership Programme.

Trails in Academic and Administrative Leadership in Kenya

A Memoir

Ratemo Waya Michieka



Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
DAKAR

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my beloved wife, Esther Nyabonyi Michieka, my children and my grandchildren, who encouraged me as I worked through the various drafts.

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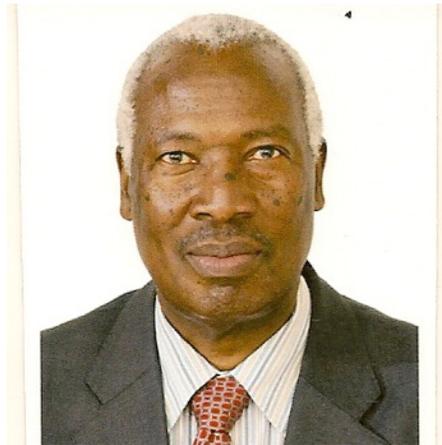
About the Book

Trails in Academic and Administrative Leadership is a book with an insight through which the author narrates his experiences. The autobiography gives an account of a young school boy who was dedicated to factual knowledge as he strove to perform his duties with integrity. The account details the events which led the author to become a scholar, a professor, a vice-chancellor and a chairman of Council. The many organizations which he assisted to build and/or revitalize are clearly identified. His early experiences, right from the formative stages to his time at the university, created a formidable character of an administrator who nurtured young institutions into world-class centres. His training in the USA exposed the author to international scholars and university linkages and he ended up working in Nigeria. This is the maturity stage of the author.

The book covers experiences which positively impacted on staff and students later in their lives. The quality of academic programmes and faculty are paramount in the industrial take-off of developing countries. A whole chapter is dedicated to this important sector of educational development. Environmental pollution and degradation is given prominence as many countries are hurting in this respect. Some of the socio-political experiences with far-reaching implications are discussed, and procedures of academic promotions are highlighted in the book. A comparison between management and leadership is given prominence in the context of political expediency.

This book is not only meant for scholars, but also decision-makers in various managerial and academic leadership positions.

About the Author



Ratemo W. Michieka is a Professor at the University of Nairobi and the Chairman of Kenyatta University Council. His teaching career spans over 35 years, punctuated with other national appointments. Michieka holds a PhD from the prestigious Rutgers University, USA, where he was recognized as a Distinguished Alumnus in 2003 for the exemplary work he has done in Kenya's educational development. He did his postdoctoral research at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, Nigeria, prior to his departure to his home country, Kenya.

Michieka was the founding Vice-Chancellor of the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. He also served as the Chairman of the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA). He was also the Director-General of the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) in charge of the country's environmental protection among many other responsibilities.

Michieka has published many papers locally and internationally, and has written a number of books. Michieka was a member of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); and is a Fellow and Honorary Secretary of the Kenya National Academy of Sciences (KNAS).

Abbreviations

AAU	Association of African Universities
AICAD	African Institute for Capacity Development
ACU	Association of Commonwealth Universities
CAES	College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences
CATS	Continuous Assessment Tests
CAVS	College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences
CBD	Centre for Biological Diversity
CBPS	College of Biological and Physical Sciences
CCK	Communication Commission of Kenya
CEES	College of Education and External Studies
CHE	Commission for Higher Education
CHS	College of Health Sciences
CHSS	College of Humanities and Social Sciences
CIMMYT	International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
D-G	Director-General
DFID	Department of International Trade
DP	Deputy Principal
DVC (AA)	Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs
EAC	East African Community
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FKE	Federation of Kenya–Employees
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
HELB	Higher Education Loans Board
ICARDA	International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
IUCEA	Inter University Council for East Africa

JAB	Joint Admissions Board
JEPAK	Japan Ex-participants of Kenya
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JKIA	Jomo Kenyatta International Airport
JKUSO	Jomo Kenyatta University Students Organization
JKUAT	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Cooperation
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KARI	Kenya Agricultural Research Institute
KATA	Kenya Agricultural Teachers Association
KBS	Kenya Bureau of Standards
PCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KEMRI	Kenya Medical Research Institute
KENET	Kenya Education Network
KCSE	Kenya Secondary Certificate Education
MBWA	Management by Walking Around
NACOSTI	National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation
NEC	Nyamagesa Education Club
NYC	New York City
OCS	Officer Commanding Station
SAA	South African Airways
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UASU	University Association Staff Union
UIP	Universities Investment Project
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UoN	University of Nairobi
USAB	University Students' Accommodation Board
USHEPIA	University Science, Humanities and Engineering Partnerships in Africa
UWV	University of West Virginia
VC	Vice Chancellor
WSSEA	Weed Science Society of Eastern Africa

Preface

This book presents my detailed profile as a young man who grew up in rural Kenya, rose through the academic ranks to become an authority in administrative and academic management. The book begins with my enrolment at the primary school where I started to play leadership roles at a tender age. I met challenges as I tried to show justice in my role as class representative. As I proceeded to high school, I joined one of the prestigious secondary schools where I met other students from the whole country and had no option than to cope with the cultural richness and complexities of my country, Kenya. I also met British teachers who were on their way out as Kenya had attained its independence.

The experience I gained at high school hardened my stand in life. Over the years, I learnt to be fair and mindful of my student fraternity. The continuous administrative experience gained from youth assisted me to manage bigger institutions later in life. The university training in the USA impacted strongly upon me up till this day. Discipline in research and cultural interaction was a life-long experience. The Nigerian post-doctoral fellowship squarely put me on an African soil with a difference.

I offer an introduction to early human culture and cultural value as I progressed through my academic career. Similarly, I offer rare insights into the human nature during my management undertaking. I do not intend to cover all the work that I performed as a vice-chancellor during a very tumultuous political period in Kenya, but wish to show that academic life can be challenging, yet profitable, in nurturing the young faculty and students. I have demonstrated that African universities can be run with the least political interference, yet this was not the case in the 1980s and 1990s in Kenya. Both internal and external influences made the roles of university administrators difficult and unpleasant.

I also demonstrate in the book the role of international linkages. Development partners had their agenda and vice-chancellors had to balance between these agenda and what was good or beneficial for their institutions. They were driven to hard walls at times.

As an administrator in the environmental authority, I went through very difficult moments trying to do justice to the Kenyan environment and conservation of natural resources. Despite the many hurdles I encountered as the Director General, I was able to articulate environmental matters across Kenya and beyond. My role as a chairman of Council and management gave me a total insight of university intricacies and management. These are complex systems.

I have compared the roles of university Councils and other organizations that constitute a complete university. This is also well articulated in the book. The role of University Council members is underestimated, yet they are the counting officers of the universities.

I have discussed the importance of maintaining quality education, standards and international competition. The role of ICT and modern communication techniques must be embraced in the present-day technology.

From my own experiences, I cannot overemphasize the importance of integrity, humility, meritocracy, time management, and fair judgement. Our universities have reasonably well set out administrative structures, but individual leadership has a lot to do with the success or failure of mission and vision. There is more in our universities than the apparently meaningless routine cycles.

I trust that our university administrators and scholars will find this book useful in their careers.