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Elevation of the University College into a University

Once I was elevated to the position of a principal, my immediate focus was to develop and prepare the college to be granted full university status. For this to be actualized, a lot of negotiations took place. This is because no matter what we did at the college to deserve the elevation to full university status, the final decision was always political. This, indeed, was the case with all other universities in Kenya.

The Head of state had to declare the full status of a university. In our case, and despite the reputation we had gained as a college of technology, many technocrats and colleagues from other universities; and most surprisingly, Kenyatta University the parent institution, lobbied against the establishment and granting of full university status to us. I established networks and used numerous operatives to push the agenda. Close allies of the minister for education, politicians and even international colleagues were requested to pass a good word for the college to be elevated into a full-fledged university. Due academic and political processes were followed.

I personally had to get involved. I recall one evening when I was summoned to Nakuru to meet the president, Daniel Arap Moi to justify our quest. My staff prepared briefs and about twenty senior members of staff accompanied me to support our cause. Several were from his ethnic community.

I was bluntly asked to explain why we wanted to disassociate from Kenyatta University. The president was in the company of many other politicians. We slowly explained the developments we had achieved and why this needed to be consolidated with the granting of full university autonomy as the fifth public university of the Republic of Kenya. The programmes we conducted were completely different from those in Kenyatta University. We wanted to keep that character. The following week, the president made the announcement declaring the college a full-fledged university.

Planning which character JKUAT (now a fully chartered University) would take was my fundamental priority. It was now the fifth Kenyan public university. I felt that it was my privilege and turn to make a mark in Kenya's public universities. It would not be business as usual. I had a duty and a brand name to nurture.

JKUAT was declared a full-fledged university in April 1994 with an automatic choice of a Chancellor who was the Head of state. Preparations for the inauguration and receiving of the Act had to be made. The appointment of Council and the Vice-Chancellor were also an imperative requirement to be performed. It is important to walk through the actual preparation and the culmination of the award of the Act. More politics again resurfaced during the appointment of the Council and VC.

Academic Programmes

Transformation of a complex technological college into a university had its problems. The Academic Board wrote all the programmes with a specific mandate that JKUAT's character was based on Science and Technology. There were very few social science courses planned.

The initial courses offered were Engineering and Agriculture. The JICA support was specifically meant for the two programmes. The Kenya government supported the same and when I took over the leadership, I religiously adopted the same. We only added science-based courses to strengthen Agriculture and Engineering. The board, and later the Senate, was also fully aware of the mandate and supported the establishment of a first-class Science and Technology-based modern university. With that understanding in mind, I embarked on the preparations for the grandiose launch of the JKUAT of the twenty-first century.

There were several instruments of authority and personnel which were necessary before we were awarded full university status. The Council was appointed through some consultation with its interim Chairperson, Dr Stephen Mulinge, a plant pathologist (now deceased). Several Council members were named including Uhuru Kenyatta, the current President of Kenya. It was a lean and active Council. In our Act, I was the first Principal to include the Secretary of the Commission for Higher Education, now Commission for University Education, as a member of Council.

It happened to be Prof. Joseph Mungai, my mentor, who had retired as a VC from the University of Nairobi. He was my first employer at the University of Nairobi, and also my close advisor. He was a great asset in the development of JKUAT academic courses.

My appointment as the founding Vice-Chancellor was marred by back door solicitations since many professors had wanted the post. They had seen a great university coming up and wanted to reap where they had not sown. It was a dirty game being played; and I later realized that even other colleagues who had been supporting my efforts then turned against me and started to bring in nepotism. But the Chancellor had the appointment powers and his word was final.

I had excellent rapport with JICA and we were working well together to ensure that all the support agreements were in place and implemented on time. Technically, I had no problem with the implementation of the programmes. I had the competence and drive to enable the young university meet its dream.

After a few weeks of closed-door soliciting, the Chancellor ignored other candidates and officially appointed me as the first Vice-Chancellor of JKUAT in April 1994. Again the appointment was aired in the news and I got down to work. I had seen the growth of the institution having been the Deputy Principal, Principal and now the Vice-Chancellor. This upward mobility gave me inspiration to steer the university to greater heights. I promised myself to develop my own brand of “Leave a Legacy”.

Preparation for the Instruments of Power

The university had to be officially inaugurated once the officials were in place. We already had students on campus. A reasonable number of lecturers had already been employed. Every step in planning for the launch had to be expedited to allow for the first-year intake through the Joint Admissions Board (JAB).

There were four vital instruments of power which had to be in place before the inauguration: 1. The University Mace; 2. The University Logo; 3. The University Act; and 4. The University Seal. These were the instruments of power that bestowed legitimacy to an academic process. In addition to these requirements, we had to robe the Chancellor.

All these preparations required my personal input with the blessings of the Council and Senate. I knew what was required, having witnessed similar procedures for Moi and Egerton universities. I just had to ensure that the instruments were made and delivered to us. State functionaries were involved and I kept them posted regarding every development towards the inauguration day.

It was not easy to manufacture the mace. It took me time to get the place maces were moulded. The Asian shop I was referred to was the only place in the industrial area where they could mould one. They also made seals. I asked the owner to manufacture the mace which had been designed by our engineering and architecture department. He gave me a quotation, which I took to the Council for approval and it was granted.

The Asian's foundry was always busy with demands from customers. I literally visited the factory daily to ensure that the mace indeed complied with the University mission and character. I remember taking my son, Michieka Okioga, to the factory to see what was going on and why I kept revisiting it.

It was my sole responsibility to ensure that all academic instruments were in place and ready for the launch. I would not delegate this particular role. I delegated other responsibilities to other senior staff members. Over time, and as part of my administrative leanings, I would delegate roles to my deputies and other academic staff, depending on the nature and importance of the task.

The same factory agreed to manufacture the seal at the same time but at a less cost. Moulding it was not as demanding as the mace. The logo was printed at the university and registered with the relevant office in the Attorney-General's Chambers in Nairobi.

Luckily, as we were preparing the instruments of authority, Parliament was busy debating our Act, spearheaded by the Minister for Education, Hon. Joseph J. Kamotho. I remember attending a parliamentary session to respond to any questions which could arise; as I could not debate openly, I gave technical backup in writing to the minister. The normal procedures were followed and the Act was passed.

I remember one question which was asked was why the university could not be called Jaramogi Oginga University. The minister replied that the founding president provided the land. We had done a thorough preparation during the drafting of the bill and had no major issues. The bill sailed through as I was busy following the instruments of authority.

It was such a headache getting a tailor who would accept to make the Chancellor's gown. After a lengthy search and consultations with State House staff, we finally found one on Mama Ngina Street, Nairobi. Again, I had to get a designer from Kenyatta University to make a blue print and pattern. We got a lecturer from the Design Department who assisted in the designing. The finished product was then taken to the State House for approval, and indeed it was.

All systems were operational for the university's inauguration on 25 April 1994. President Daniel Arap Moi requested for a draft speech which I had to prepare in consultation with my Deputy Vice-Chancellors who had also been appointed. They were academics from other universities and included Dr Josephat Yego, Prof. Henry Thairu and Dr Rosalind Mutua. Prof. Thairu took my earlier post as the one in charge of academic affairs. The new university setup was complete, with the Council as the highest administrative organ, then the Vice-Chancellor, Senate and Faculty staff.

Our University Act was the newest at that time and I took advantage of comparing it with the old universities' Acts. I edited clauses which I knew had problems in other Public universities. There was one clause in the statutes which stipulated who teaches at the university, when, how, where and by what means. The full responsibility of students' affairs was at the hands of the Senate. It was explicit in the statutes that the admission of students into JKUAT was the Senate's affair. The JKUAT Act of 1994 which was later repealed in 2013 changed the operations and compositions of public universities.

My discussion in this book reflects on the then Act and roles as at 1994 to 2013. I had a clear vision for the new university on expansion. This will be covered in a different chapter of this book.

The day for the inauguration came and we had everything in place: The Mace, the Logo and the Seal. I had delivered the president's gown at the State House and

requested his details to ensure that they came with it on 25 April 1994. We had done rehearsals with the graduating students and members of staff. They were all excited to know that we were now a full-fledged university, delinked from Kenyatta University.

We graduated a small number of 400 students who had done first-degree courses. The courses had been approved by the KU Senate but taught by the new university staff according to the KU statutes. The relationship between parent or main universities and constituent colleges is often constrained. The Senate's undue conditions to constituent colleges hamper quick development and maturity.

The Senate considers itself the ultimate decision-maker and usually frustrates efforts to nurture and develop colleges under their guidance. Also, University Acts or Statutes did not stipulate how long the constituent college would take before being granted full university status. In some cases, Vice-Chancellors and Principals have to take personal approaches in decision-making.

Many African universities have tended to subdue the fast growth of upcoming colleges. JKUAT was not an exception. We faced challenges, sometimes ridicule, and many times postponement of our agenda in Senate. Frustrations, therefore, were common and obvious resentment by some individuals was a bottleneck. These factors did not, however, deter our own push to be an independent University. The academic programmes for JKUAT were mainly Science and Engineering-based, which the mother university, KU, did not have. The parent university was mainly an education-based institution which trained Kenyan secondary teachers. That was its niche.

It was therefore difficult for us to relate amicably in academic matters. Senate relied on decisions made by our Academic Board. I still do not understand the logic of linking JKUAT to Kenyatta University. KU was an education-based institution whereas JKUAT was science-based. There was no logic whatsoever in this decision. The young University College was, however, now mature to be the independent fifth public university of Kenya and form its own academic character.

A Full-fledged University

On 25 April 1994, we were declared an autonomous university. During our preparations for the big day, my office had invited all types of people from within and outside Kenya. We had invited public and private universities, members of Parliament, university associations, JICA, companies, industries, parents of the graduating students and a few secondary schools. This was a big day for us and we had to showcase it. We had gained popularity as a fine technology college which produced practically-trained graduates. We therefore extended many invitations to industries we attached our students to.

I was not aligned to any political party in my academic career. But the ruling party KANU then had unprecedented presence in all spheres of life in Kenya and

even outside. It was therefore implied that I should not extend any invitation to the members of the opposition. I found this odd and decided to defy the quiet rule.

I took it upon myself to invite the leaders of the opposition parties, and most specifically the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. I considered him and his group as Kenyan dignitaries and they deserved recognition in our functions. I convinced myself that I should not be afraid of inviting Mzee Jaramogi Odinga. I was anxious to have the task finished and I dared anybody who could challenge our decision since it was not a mistake to invite the group. The worst that could happen to me was to be fired from being the Vice-Chancellor.

I felt that political parties change, and I noticed an opportunity in disguise and utilized it. This is one matter on which I did not bother to consult the State House; the Council, however, was fully aware, and so was the Academic Board. The university was inviting guests and had the full authority and privilege to pick our invitees. I took full responsibility on any subsequent consequences thereafter.

All the invited guests started to arrive prior to the president's arrival. Jaramogi Oginga Odinga arrived early with a group of politicians and I ushered them to the podium. The staff and students cheered him as he raised his white flywhisk high in the air to them. I heartily received him and took him straight to the designated seats for VIPs where most invited guests took their places.

President Daniel Arap Moi arrived a few minutes after Mzee Odinga. I received him with his entourage and ushered him to his office as the would-be Chancellor of the JKUAT. I surely knew that he had been briefed of the arrival of several dignitaries, including his long-term arch-rival Odinga. As we received him outside the main administration block, I quickly whispered to the Education Minister, Mr Joseph J. Kamotho that Odinga was already comfortably seated at the graduation square. He looked straight into my eyes and said that was okay.

I was relieved of the possible future consequences. My fellow Vice-Chancellors joined the president to have a cup of tea as we all started exchanging pleasantries. One thing I recall was how tense I was as I was entertaining all these people from all over the country and beyond. The Japanese dignitaries who had been supporting the college were present in large numbers and were comfortable amongst the Kenyans. Their role is discussed in another chapter.

After tea and signing of the Visitors' Book, the president was ready to march to the Graduation Square. The chairman of Council and I briefed him on the day's programme and what we expected of him. I had already been appointed as the Vice-Chancellor, the Council was in place and the Act was ready.

All the instruments of power were in place and the day's proceedings were on course. I had prepared well. The past several months of my life had been dedicated to an inauguration that was to last only four hours. I remember the lengthy periods of time which led up to this great event. I had prepared well and left nothing to chance. My wife, Esther, used to advise me on several matters, especially during

the drawing up of the list of invited guests across the political parties. She had also assisted in the drafting of the official speech and in the rehearsals.

The presidential procession marched to the dais in this order: Two students, staff, deans, Council members, vice-chancellors, chairman of Council and I. Staff wore their ceremonial gowns but the new Chancellor did not have one. The president was to be honoured first and robed at this inauguration ceremony.

The ceremony started at ten o'clock with the national anthem and the rest of the programme followed thereafter. Senate had approved the award of the first *Honoris causa* to H.E. the President who was going to become the Chancellor of JKUAT.

I declared the first congregation of JKUAT as per the 1994 Act. I read the relevant sections and requested the president to come forward to be robed. I read his citation which had been drafted by me with support from the State House. It was not strong in academics but in politics. It took me about ten minutes to go through the modest curriculum vitae of Daniel T. Arap Moi.

After the citation he walked forward, bowed to the congregation and staff and put on his robe. I raised the hood over his head and dropped it behind his back. I then capped him, declared him the first Chancellor of the JKUAT. The fanfare music was played as the crowd cheered him. I was a proud Vice-Chancellor who then awarded the President the Honorary degree, *Honoris causa*. He was the first official "student" I would be awarding a degree. A similar event would be repeated to his successor, Mwai Kibaki, who took over as Kenya's third president in January 2003. I now knew why Prof Joseph Mungai had explained to me that Vice-Chancellors were supposed to be addressed as "Your Magnificence". He told me that it was the right salutation and one day it would be adopted. The Chancellor was now empowered to hand me the instrument of authority as stipulated by the 1994 Act.

The Academic Registrar, Mr Joel Mberia, handed over the Mace, the Logo, and the Seal to the Chancellor to hand them over to me. The Chancellor gave me the Mace with clear instructions that this was the symbol of power for the VC to conduct the academic affairs of the university. He did the same with regards to the Logo and the Seal. Every activity was exciting and the crowd cheered, accompanied by Police band fanfare music. I do not know whether the current wave of new Vice-Chancellors across Africa get to be fully briefed concerning the meaning and importance of these instruments of power.

Several speeches of goodwill messages followed starting with my fellow Vice-Chancellors: Professors Francis J. Gichaga (University of Nairobi), Justin Irina (Moi University), George Eshiwani (Kenyatta University), Japheth Kiptoon (Egerton University), Freda Brown (United States International University). Other messages were delivered from the Association of African universities, Association of Commonwealth universities, Japanese universities, and JICA Resident Representative, to name but a few. Individuals and private organizations that we had linkages with also sent their goodwill messages.

The messages were brief and we embarked on the other formalities of the day. Our first graduation was held then. Some other speeches were delivered. I delivered mine in about 15 minutes, pointing out that the institution would maintain its original character of being a Science-based technological university with practical-oriented graduates who would meet Kenya's industrial challenges.

I challenged the Ministry of Education for not providing adequate funding for research and staff remuneration. In his speech, the Chancellor congratulated me for steering JKUAT to its status and also producing graduates who were needed in the country. He further stated that since we had started making history, we should continue excelling. Those words were encouraging to us all in the Senate. He also praised the role of the Japanese people for their generous technical assistance.

As the events were unfolding, Mzee Jaramogi Oginga Odinga was listening attentively. He was sitting in the front row, next to a Member of Parliament. My wife, Esther, was sitting right behind them taking her notes as speaker after speaker took the lectern. We would later share the day's events. Nobody had raised any concern about the invited guests. I had been confident in my official speech and had used my past public speaking experiences at various fora to deliver it.

Quoting the relevant section of the Act, I declared the congregation dissolved. We then marched back to the Vice-Chancellor's office in a reverse order with a dean carrying the 25 kg silver decorated Mace. Guests were invited for lunch and everybody who attended was happy. They showered my Senate with praises and the name of JKUAT started rising. This was the beginning of mentoring my staff for future leadership positions.

Mzee Jaramogi Oginga Odinga attended the luncheon which he enjoyed very much. He was heartily chatting with the persons who sat next to him. As he was leaving, long after the President's entourage had left, he called me aside and remarked, "*Rapemo*, (another name for Ratemo as referred to in the Luo language) *thank you very much for inviting me to this great occasion. Your university is a promising one, keep up the good work.*" I thanked him and he left with the students cheering him. He did not address them, which was an excellent gesture on his part. From then on my independence and mode of doing things impressed the community. My bravery paid off and I learned one lesson: Humility and respect pay.

Building an Institution

The inauguration period came to pass. We started to ask ourselves what the future held for JKUAT. I was now the Founding Vice-Chancellor, the Council was in place, and my deputies had been appointed; what next? Most Kenyans were happy that there was a new public university which would admit extra number of students in the next intake.

I matured with JKUAT. There were several tasks which I had to steer forward if we did not want to regress. We had to slowly phase out diploma courses and

replace them with degree courses. That was one way of being relevant to Kenyan needs. Specifically, I was challenged to address the following areas in the transition from college to university:

- Staff recruitment and remuneration
- Staff training
- Development of academic programmes
- Writing the statutes
- Admitting the new students into new programmes
- Infrastructure, lecture theatres, halls, offices
- Positive staff inducement
- Maintaining quality in academics
- Outreach programmes, campuses
- Financial sourcing and fundraising for the institution
- Research proposals, protocols and publications
- ICT as an independent outfit
- Land demarcation and boundaries establishment for the campus
- International linkages
- Equity in gender
- Arid and semi-arid student enrolment, positive discrimination
- Water and sewerage treatment
- Industrial attachment
- Establishment of students' union (JKUSO)
- Strategic planning documents, the SWOT analysis
- Environmental concerns – tree planting, a green university and Thika Highway
- Outreach services to the community among the several managerial and administrative responsibilities.

The list was long and we had to start somewhere. I knew that this was a mammoth undertaking, but I was prepared for the task. The tasks enumerated above are not complete, but it should be noted that the transformation of any institution is a complex matter. I neither had clear criteria on how to apply our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) at this point in time, nor SMART objectives. I had a clear vision, however, of what JKUAT could be in twenty or more years.

It was not practically possible to tackle each one of the tasks enumerated above. But I shall endeavour to select a few crucial ones which made JKUAT the university it is today. I shall also specify areas which had stagnated the development of Kenya due to inappropriate attention to critical areas.

From the outset, I convinced myself that institutions reflect the leadership, and leadership reflects them. I also knew that certain qualities like integrity, respect, honour, humility, honesty and earnest consultations mattered a lot in institutional

and capacity building. Above all, I wanted to be open-minded and generous to my workers no matter the ranks, because they all counted in achieving the tasks. I embarked on creating a university with a specific image.

The new Council was constituted according to the University Act of 1994. The Initial Council Members were: Dr Stephen Mulinge, Chair – a Plant Pathologist; Dr David Koech, a Microbiologist; Tom Owour of FKE; Uhuru Kenyatta, Prof Joseph Maina Mungai – Medical Doctor and Former VC and then serving as Secretary for CHE (now CUE); Engineer Sharagwe; and Amb. Ali Chirau Mwakwere; Mr Sugiyama (Representative of JICA). This was a Council constituting of highly-respected academics and professionals in Kenya.

They assisted me a lot in laying a firm foundation for the growth of the new university and their support was unwavering. For example, most of the staff the new university inherited had only first and second degrees. My immediate concern was to build qualified staff capacity by ensuring that most members of the academic staff had PhDs. With a lot of resistance from the non-PhD holders, but with the Council's support, a letter was sent to all affected members of staff to pursue their PhD studies with full scholarships provided by the Council. Those who benefited from this directive are still appreciative of what we did. The scholarships were tenable in the USA, Canada, UK, Japan, South Africa and Australia.

The University College was known for training in Agriculture, Engineering and Science. I had to steer the Senate alongside the same disciplines with additional unique academic fields. I had written no strategic plan but I had a vision; a master plan and the kind of graduates to be churned out. The first task I undertook was to ensure that most of my students had gone through practical attachments and could be employed upon graduation. I led the Senate into strengthening the existing programmes and creating new ones which were customer-driven. After extensive consultations with stakeholders, new courses were created as I simultaneously sought out new staff and technicians.

New courses which were market-driven included Architecture, Mechatronics, Geomatics, Environmental Sciences, Horticulture, Landscape Architecture, Intro-mid, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Agricultural Engineering, Actuarial Sciences and several basic science courses. There were also compulsory courses which were more in social sciences than biological or physical sciences.

I strengthened the public relations office which was under my office and made sure that adequate information was given to the public. I knew the importance of timely communication of important events. Knowledge is power.

No programme was passed by the Senate until we were fully convinced that it would add value to the existing ones and graduates would be readily absorbed. How was this notion built up? My staff in the required disciplines would conduct a questionnaire. The public, industry, former students and the country's national

plan formed the basis for decision-making. We also cross-checked and interrogated courses offered by other public and private universities. We did not fear competition but aimed at good quality graduates. We got generous assistance from the Japanese government which aimed at strengthening science and technology.

On some occasions, industry, firms and manufacturing companies would place orders to employ our graduates due to the close collaboration with industry in curricular development. The university had very good linkages with industry and we used to have annual University-industry conferences, with funds approved by Council every year. This was an annual event.

The Role of the Japanese International Co-operation Agency (JICA)

Jomo Kenyatta College of Agriculture and Technology had long technical support from JICA. The first agreement was signed in 1977 and the news coverage in one of the local dailies, Nation of 10 December 1977, read thus: *“Japan has agreed to build a Kes. 200 million agricultural and technical college at Gatundu in honour of President Kenyatta. The chairperson of the project, Mr. Ngengi Muigai said the college would be built on a Harambee basis and be of the same status as the Kenya Polytechnic and Egerton College. It will be known as Jomo Kenyatta Agricultural and Technical College.”*

The co-operation had been ongoing for over 10 years when I joined the college. It was, however, limited to a few areas of concern. The co-operation aimed at supporting training, supply of equipment and development of structures on the land that had been donated by the founding President of the Republic of Kenya, the late Jomo Kenyatta. It was set up as a certificate and diploma-awarding institution. The ministries of Technical Training and Education deployed staff here.

I joined JKUAT about nine years after the agreement had been signed. At that time several technicians were being trained in Japanese institutes. They stayed for a few months in Japan and returned with a certificate in a technical course. The curriculum was overseen by the Ministries of Technical Training and Education.

My first visit to the college during agricultural teachers’ conference gave me a dull impression of a quiet, dusty, low lying environment. Some areas were bushy with overgrown imperata grass typical of an ecological zone five of Kenya’s land classification. It is a typical clay cotton soil site. Some areas here were wet and overgrown with the water grass. Some sections of the land were cracky, typical of clay cotton soil conditions.

The low-lying ceilings, walls and hallways attracted my attention as I walked to the assembly hall where we held the Kenya Agricultural Teachers’ Association (KATA) conference. It was a two-day meeting and I never bothered knowing more than that. The college was no match to the massive and voluminous University of Nairobi. Little did I know that this was going to be my domicile for a good 13 years of engagement.

I decided to influence JICA, now that we had become the fifth public university. I quickly got to know the team leader, Mr Sugiyama, who was the day-to-day contact person of the JICA project in JKUAT. Our first meeting was formal with a few exchanges of words. I had been given a good briefing by the Academic Registrar, Mr Joel Mberia, on how to handle the Japanese nationals. Mr Mberia was very useful in our negotiations later and he became my right-hand administrator. I learnt their behaviour and respected their culture and humility. In fact, I emulated their characteristics of being calm and tolerant whenever we had an interaction.

Prior to my appointment to JKUAT, JICA supported projects that were already being conducted there. The Kenyan and Japanese governments had signed an agreement through which JICA assisted in technical training, capital development and support for academic development. Our government was meeting its normal obligations of staff remuneration and some recurrent expenditure, whereas JICA was involved in technical co-operation. This was, I think, the best external aid that a university of our calibre received.

I steered clear of any controversy and nurtured the support for all the 13 years I was at the helm of the university. I signed many contracts between the two governments, and I made sure that each contract had a large proportion of academic staff training. Earlier contracts were mainly short-term technical training rather than degree-awarding ones. In fact, I discontinued the training of technicians and opted for Master's and PhD training. This arrangement boosted human resource capacity availability.

I had trained over 50 PhD members of staff before I left JKUAT. My staff retention percentage was high as I did not lose any after training. I guaranteed them posts whenever they trained; and allowed for importation of generous quantities of their personal effects, and expedited processing of duty-free cars. I did everything possible within my powers to ensure comfortable arrival and settlement of my staff from any university worldwide. Many of them brought teaching and research equipment from their universities. Part of our quality assurance was due to modern specialized laboratory equipment.

JICA supported physical structures and laboratory equipment. The Kenya government would not match its obligations at times. I learnt the art of persuasion and techniques of public relationships. JICA, under the able leadership of Prof. Nakagawa, was very responsive to me and the requests I made. The Ministries of Education and Finance were supportive of all the projects we negotiated and I kept them informed. Project negotiations usually took several months and involved a team of experts from both governments. JKUAT negotiated for Kenya Government. The creation of JKUAT character was visible when we graduated students who were productive and practical in their employment stations. I used to get calls for graduates to be absorbed in industries.

My other task once we became a university was to absorb, train, re-train or send away former college staff. The university changed in status and it was my duty to smoothly release under-qualified staff and replace them with those who had the required university credentials. I had to be careful to avoid bad blood between those departing and the ones staying.

As the head of the institution and in conjunction with the Ministries of Technical Training and Education, we carefully crafted the requirements of staff release or retention. My deputy vice-chancellors in charge of Administration and Academic Affairs had to come up with clear criteria. Despite the very transparent requirements for staff training or recruitment, we still had complaints which I personally had to attend to. My handling of these unique cases tested my leadership prowess.

I decided to follow the criteria, keep those qualified to teach or perform other duties and release the unqualified ones as quickly as possible to avoid litigations. There was no directive that the new university would absorb the college staff we found there. We wanted to set up a modern, quality university with qualified and dedicated staff. It was a smooth transition despite a few difficulty cases which needed the intervention of the Council. We reported every action to the Council with well-written minutes. The Council in turn approved and amended, where necessary, our decisions accordingly. I was always very concerned about the Council minutes since they were the final authority to allow us implement decisions.

We had an understanding group of Council members who knew their roles and abided by them. They entrusted all matters administrative and academic to the chief executive and the Senate. We in turn kept the chairman abreast of any developments. The university became a centre of attraction due to the unique and practical programmes we offered and the JICA support we received.

We renewed projects after every five years. There were several midterm reviews before a final big review was done to approve the project. Normally, several experts could come in advance teams before their leader to collect preliminary information. The advance team used to interview staff for specific information in preparation for the signing of the agreement. This was important in order to prove my transparency, prudent utilization of the Japanese taxpayers' money and maintenance of academic quality.

We signed most of the projects after I joined the college. They covered agricultural and mechanical technical co-operation, staff training, and equipment provision, short and long-term training courses for senior management. One unique condition of the project was that a Japanese expert had to be seconded for every programme to work with a Kenyan counterpart. At times, non-qualified Japanese staff was seconded.

I changed the practice of accepting anybody without scrutinizing their academic and technical expertise. I therefore demanded full curriculum vitae of anybody who joined us as a counterpart expert and requested for a PhD graduate in case

of teaching and research, or a Master's degree if the person was going to be doing purely technical work. I also demanded proficiency in the English language. I knew that communication could be a problem to my staff and students alike. The team leader was an understanding man and he complied.

Let me take one area of academic programme – Engineering – and demonstrate its broad objective. During the curriculum development, we knew that engineering was the application of all related science and technology to provide solutions to problems of mankind. We further underpinned the fact that the courses in the area were known to spur economic development in Kenya. Rapid industrialization had to be achieved through heavy investment in engineering education, science and technology. The curriculum we therefore drew borrowed a lot from what other universities had done, especially the Japanese ones.

I knew several engineers in Kenya then. They were less than 2,000. The Asian Tigers had over 25,000 with a population of about 35 million. We aimed at producing problem-solving graduates with a wide range of industrial attachment experience. The engineering graduates had to acquire appropriate competencies and skills especially in design. We emphasized problem-solving in all our technical courses throughout the curriculum development. One had to have the ability to identify a problem and solve it; and also be able to provide answers for problems. One had to be an effective communicator.

We were all aware that Kenyan accreditation bodies would need to place great emphasis on problem-solving through Engineering, Science and Technology. We wanted our graduates to attract employers. Indeed, they turned out to be more marketable than those from other universities. The same rigorous curriculum writing was done by staff for all faculties.

The same procedure in writing new courses was followed. Agriculture, Sciences and Architecture were similarly developed. We maintained our character and mission as we debated on the development of various courses. The Senate had a vision and mission clearly pronounced as we set up the new institution.

I had to plead with the Senate and convince them not to allow an excess intake of students in the humanities and social sciences. Our Act was explicit regarding the institution as being agricultural, technological and innovative. Those were our driving forces. Things changed later on and the university was flooded with all types of disciplines.

Training and Visits to Japanese Institutions

All signed agreements had components of short and long-term training. I had also included: Chairman of Council, senior management training for the Deans, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, and the Vice-Chancellor. Many of the senior staff visited several places in Japan to gain first-class experiences in industry and institutions which trained our PhD and MSc students.

The exposure was meant to be an eye-opener for Kenyans to implement part of what could be gathered during the tour. I also had several senior management courses there. For example, a visit to Toyota city, where thousands of vehicles are manufactured, was an exciting experience. I wondered whether our African countries could establish such an outfit. The automation and production of vehicles is so advanced that thousands of vehicles are produced each week. I am sure my colleagues must have also wondered when Kenya would attain that level of vehicle manufacturing.

Every person who went on a training tour was accompanied by a Japanese expert in the relevant field of study. The expert was responsible for all travel logistics, protocol and language translation. This feature was important to ensure value for the trip in order to avoid culture shock particularly for students. A good number of staff learnt the Japanese language and wrote their theses in the language with English translation.

During one of my tours in Japan, I was able to present a paper to scientists from a number of Asian countries. The conference whose theme was, 'Culture Crossroads, where Culture Meets Races' exposed me to various types of sub-races which make the greater Asian block. Through several papers presented, I was able to phenotypically distinguish between residents from Hokkaido and those in Kyoto or Okinawa. There are typical distinguishing characteristics which are unique to the individuals. The significance of these meetings was meant to inculcate some kind of Japanese culture into our institution.

I am not sure how much we gained in terms of attitude change to work. But my staff gained degrees and returned home with duty-free state-of-the-art cars. I am not sure how much technology they gained to transfer to our country.

Staff on long-term training was allowed to bring into the country one vehicle duty-free per individual for personal use. The privilege was awarded to all academic staff of public universities. My staff took advantage of this waiver and enjoyed the benefit to the fullest. This was one of my staff inducements for their retention.

We were able to hire quality teaching assistants with a primary aim of training them to PhD levels and consequently retaining them. The idea worked and I am proud of my training record while I was at the helm of JKUAT. We further attracted staff from the other established universities because of some rare privileges.

I believed in firm, reliable and hardworking staff. I had my own managerial and leadership skills which assisted me in the winning confidence of my staff. As a team leader, I had to perform and be seen to walk the talk.

I knew one thing for sure: that every team needs team work and team spirit; and that the members of a team relies on each other for performance. I encouraged their working together towards our goals. I also encouraged them to seek the best solutions for any problem which could derail our young university. Personal leadership in a business enterprise plays a role in the way workers render their services.

A positive attitude, whatever the circumstances of our working place, was a source of health and happiness. I developed a generous and cheerful attitude. I believed in a corporate business principle, by continuously communicating from top down and bottom up on time. My duty as a chief executive was to integrate every one into a harmonious whole. I knew that leadership rests on this wise power to translate our mission and vision of inspiring leadership which could create a firm academic institution for our country and beyond. My philosophy was to act and not react.