
Vice-Chancellorship and Networking for University Development

The thirteen years I spent as the Vice-Chancellor of JKUAT was the most rewarding period in my career development. One of the things I learnt during my tenure as VC is the multiplicity of roles that a VC performs. A VC literally is expected to perform duties that range from administration, fundraising, public relations, to academic work. The VC is the national and international public face of the institution. These roles can sometimes overwhelm and one can easily overlook paying adequate attention to some things.

At a personal level, this was the most active period in my life when I made impact locally and internationally. Despite my tight and demanding schedule, I was able to multi-task and perform other roles which I now consider my legacies. When I look back at the many meetings, travels, assignments and accomplishments, I wonder whether I was efficient or just a routine administrator.

The following are remarkable undertakings which occupied part of my time. All these assignments were accomplished between 1994 and 2003. I was the chairman of Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), a trustee and chairman of Kenya Education Network (KENET), a chairman who revitalized the Inter University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), manager of the African Institute for Capacity Development (AICAD), a founding member of University Science, Humanities and Engineering Partnerships in Africa (USHEPIA), a World Bank Committee member, chairman of Joint Admissions Board (JAB), chairman of Ibacho Secondary School, and finally a board member of Nairobi School.

Each one of these positions had specific terms of reference and timelines were set to achieve specific goals. I accomplished milestones in several goals as set.

Chairman of Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI)

Board members of many parastatals are normally appointed by the Head of state, with advice from relevant parent ministries. These are non-executive positions but important for the smooth running of an organization. KARI is a large agricultural parastatal which oversees all research programmes related to crops and livestock. It has several research stations which are charged with specific mandates. There were over 40 such stations which covered all Kenyan ecological zones from the high-potential to arid and semi-arid zones. Research on specific crops and animals was conducted in each station and findings presented in annual fora.

My role as a chairman was to give managerial, scientific and policy guidelines to the directors of stations. I had a powerful board comprising reputable scientists in either crops and/or animals, including culture. I am a crop and environmental scientist. I therefore had knowledge of what had to be done in order to make KARI an outstanding parastatal amongst the many that existed.

My six-year tenure as the chairman of KARI saw many changes. I combined my administrative skills and academic achievements to improve the working conditions of staff, in particular sciences. It is during my tenure that we made clear distinctions amongst staff of higher qualifications from those who had lower academic credentials. Before I was appointed the chairman, all first-degree holders were paid the same salary and other remunerations equal to second-degree holders.

There was no distinction between BSc and MSc holders. I asked the Appointment and Promotions Committee (APC) to come up with clear terms and conditions of service showing specific progression of any member after attainment of a higher academic degree. This was done within the first six months and we were able to place scientists in their respective cadres. It was shocking to find qualified scientists working as laboratory attendants instead of being in the field doing research. Staff morale went up, papers were published and external donors increased research funds.

We set up a very liberal scholarship scheme for anybody who wanted to go for further training either locally or outside. We allowed academic progression and received hundreds of scholarships from the USAID, World Bank and local universities. We however, set up some training conditions. Candidates had to have worked for a specified period of time and had to return to the station. We bonded whoever wanted to go for further studies. The returning scientists had to put in three years of service after return or pay a penalty equivalent to the period he or she was out.

With the increment in remunerations, several staff returned to KARI after their training and contributed a lot to Kenya's research sciences. I recall visiting several PhD candidates who were stationed in the University of Missouri and encouraging them to complete their degree work and return home. We did not lose any staff through this arrangement.

During my chairmanship, we introduced the KARI Biannual Scientific Conference. It used to take place every November with wide presentations of papers. I also introduced trophies for the best research papers during this time. The conferences were open to all scientists in related areas and edited proceedings were published.

Promotions to next levels depended on papers, and I remember being accused of bringing university standards to research stations. One had to publish or perish! These days it is publish, innovate or perish. I defended my stand by referring to the relevant Act which established research centres in Kenya. It was stipulated clearly that their objectives were to conduct research on their specific mandates and disseminate them for the country's development.

My director, the late Dr Cyrus Nderitu, was a hardworking individual who had published many papers in his area of expertise. He confided in me and told me that the former board had been so incompetent that he had been running the institute single-handedly. He appreciated my innovative ideas which put KARI on the world map of reputable national research centres. We continued attracting research funds for specific projects and came up with programmes for livestock and patented them.

I visited all the stations and encouraged young scientists. The parent ministry, then Science and Technology, was very supportive as we opened new centres which were put up by the World Bank funds. Modern research laboratories were established for areas which were unique for specific commodities. The accurate accounting of funds from donors was my priority. I knew the importance of using donor funds transparently for future attraction. The director had to be alert to ensure that proper books of accounts were kept when timely contract renewal was to be sought. I however, did not run the institute as a chief executive but chaired board meetings. All accounting and prudent management of resources and assets were the responsibility of the Board.

My chairmanship was not smooth all the way. As a board, we had to tackle very sensitive matters which touched on land. KARI had the largest land allocation, second to Kenya Wildlife Service. It was the responsibility of the board to ensure that all KARI assets were in inventory and guarded safely. These included moveable and immovable assets. The board was liable for all the research land in the country.

I was appointed the chairman of KARI at a time when land grabbing and transfers were at their climax. The highest degree of land corruption was the hallmark of the 1980s and 1990s. The director, Dr Cyrus Nderitu, told us that he had not acquired any custody of the KARI parcels of land. No title had been given to him by the relevant authority. The previous board had not bothered to account for the parcels of research land which KARI was entrusted with.

This was a mammoth task and a dangerous undertaking because virtually all the land titles which were missing were owned by the most powerful government

officers in Kenya. It was the who-is-who in Kenya who had access to the title deeds. In fact my research was being carried out on people's lands. KARI was viewed as a squatter. I am talking about thousands and thousands of hectares. Several pieces of prime land for breeding research were sub-divided into unmanageable portions for breeding purposes. Yet some disciplines in agriculture needed thousands of isolated hectares to carry out research. My board was, hence, charged with the responsibility of reclaiming and ascertaining KARI land titles.

The director furnished us with the available document of ownership. I used my university experience and advised the board to hire a competent lawyer and contract another competent firm of lawyers to pursue the KARI title deeds. Our internal lawyer was to provide all details and/or transfers and furnish the law firm we hired with relevant information to be used in court. As a chair of the appointments committee, I did not mince my words to the lady we hired. She was told that her first and immediate duty was to acquire all KARI title deeds and redeem any which could have been sub-divided.

We knew big names would surface but decided to carry on. The scientists, many of whom were my former students at the University of Nairobi, assisted in detailing the lawyers how KARI lands had been axed or sub-divided. They welcomed the idea and supported the Board to revert the research lands into their original purpose. The affected parcels were those for livestock holding and high-value crop research sites in high-potential areas of Kenya.

I recall specific former ministers in the Ministry of Science and Technology who had acquired large tracts of land. One of them summoned the board to a meeting in Eldoret's Sirikwa Hotel. I had a hint that he was going to arm-twist us to sign some documents and sub-divide two parcels of land. The centres were in Molo Potato and Pyrethrum Research Stations and Grassland Centre, both in Nakuru County. They were large tracts of land which were specific for highland research for animals (sheep) and potatoes.

The minister chaired the meeting and beat about the bush on very irrelevant subjects. He later on, during the discussions, asked me straight to my face what I thought about the many KARI research lands (indeed government land) which were not put into use. He proposed that they be sub-divided and, as a minister, he wanted some hectares allotted to him. I promised the members that I would take him on as long as I had the minutes ready. I had prepared myself and told him straight to his face that the board had passed minutes that all KARI land must be protected. They were meant for research and future generations.

I further explained that it was not prudent to sub-divide large-scale farms as this would affect mechanization of the farm. I further told him that we had engaged a powerful law firm to acquire all the titles. The minister had a few titles in his custody which he was not entitled to keep. By law, they were the assets of the board. One board member supported me and said that allocation

of any portion of research land to an individual would jeopardize future research protocols. Board members kept quiet; the director who was sitting next to me would not believe that I had turned down a minister's request for a piece of several hectares of land.

He surrendered the two title deeds he had brought to me to endorse for subdivision and left for other functions within the city. I honestly did not care what the consequences would be thereafter. I cared more for just actions than end results. I did not budge on this request. I am an accomplished researcher and had been fully briefed on the future consequences of research if the land was reduced to small parcels.

Research and food security go hand-in-hand. The more advanced a country is on innovations and new discoveries, the better for its citizens. My insistence and firmness regarding KARI parcels of land saved several thousands of hectares. I was able to register and acquire 100 clean title deeds for several parcels of land. The board was supportive of my efforts and we all left KARI satisfied that our research mandate was on course. Indeed, we lost some hectares in Kitale, Tigononi and Molo Research Centres. The cases were so complex that our lawyers could not unravel several fake documents which had been purportedly prepared by the lands office in Nairobi.

Kenya Education Network (KENET)

The Kenya Education Network Trust (KENET) was formed in 1999 as a membership organization to serve higher education and research institutions in Kenya. KENET is recognized by the Government of Kenya as the National Research and Education Network (NREN).

KENET is constituted and registered as a trust under the Perpetual Succession Act and its beneficiaries include students, faculty, and staff in the member institutions. It is governed by a Board of Trustees. The founder trustees and the institutions they represented were as follows: Dr Freida Brown VC, USIU, Mr Augustine Cheserem, Managing Director – Telkom Kenya, Mr Samuel Chepkong'a, Director-General, CCK, Prof Crispus Kiamba VC, UoN, Prof Raphael Munavu, VC, Moi University, Prof. Stephen Talitwala, VC, Daystar University, and I as the founding Chairman and Trustee. The Trustees were assisted by a Management Board representing founder universities and research institutions in Kenya. The day-to-day operations were run by an executive director, a group of 11 talented and skilled young engineers and technicians, three interns, two young accountants, a management consultant and a research projects administrator.

The KENET Trust had six objectives, namely:

- To provide a sustainable and high-speed internet connectivity to Educational Institutions;

- To facilitate electronic communication among beneficiaries in educational Institutions;
- To support the sharing of teaching and learning resources among educational institutions;
- To support teaching and learning over the internet for beneficiaries in educational institutions both in Kenya and outside;
- To collaborate in the development of relevant content of syllabi in educational institutions
- To collaborate in research in educational institutions.

The Kenya Educational Network (KENET) was a brain-child of a few Vice-Chancellors who came together and decided to form communication channels amongst universities and schools. The project was aimed at using high frequency systems to link up the learning institutes through various nodes. We formed a committee of trustees and I was nominated the chairman of the trustees. Each founding university paid Kes750,000 (US \$15,000) towards the funding of the project. Professors Raphael Munavu, Freida Brown, Francis Gichaga, Henry Thairu and I were the founders. The project now covers several learning institutions in Kenya and has a full complementary staff. As a chairman, I initiated the project and saw it grow to involve many universities, colleges and schools on the same frequency routes (nodes).

Partnerships with African Universities

One project which assisted in training a number of PhD students in some African universities was the partnerships we formed. University Science, Humanities and Engineering Partnerships in Africa (USHEPiA) was launched by eight universities to boost PhD training in selected science areas. Soon after the South African apartheid regime was dismantled, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of University of Cape Town (UCT), Prof. Martin West, came to visit me in JKUAT. He had two specific objectives: to find out how Kenya fared in terms of racial co-existence; and, to forge a linkage.

He was explicit in his first objective and I could tell from the questions his team asked me. The primary objective of his mission, however, was to forge linkage amongst eight African universities. It was a UCT initiative to promote collaboration amongst established African researchers in the generation and dissemination of knowledge and to build institutional and human capacity in cash-strapped African universities. The goal was to develop a network of African researchers to address development requirements in sub-Saharan Africa.

I welcomed the initiative. I wanted to have my staff trained in UCT and to share research findings through collaboration and staff/student exchange. I was very concerned about my staff acquiring quality training so that they could take care of JKUAT. The university was young and needed all assistance possible in stabilizing its ambitious programmes.

After our initial meeting, Prof. West visited Makerere University, University of Dar-es-Salaam, University of Nairobi, University of Zambia, University of Botswana and University of Zimbabwe. There were eight universities collaborating with UCT and a memorandum of understanding was signed between UCT and 21 Vice-Chancellors and deans of Science and Engineering. The agreement was that UCT would be the host and training university and the eight would be sending their trainees there. We got initial scholarships from Carnegie Corporation, The Rockefeller Foundation and Mellon.

The linkage was boosted by appointing four of us to the International Steering Committee for fundraising and selection. We sourced substantial money from friendly donors and were able to train several PhD students who helped boost faculty members in the collaborating universities. I gained a lot in having over 10 PhD trainees under this arrangement. In the process, UCT built a magnificent African House with the funds we raised. The house accommodated students and had special rooms for visiting professors plus conference halls. This was a landmark for UCT.

The University of Dar-es-Salaam also set a telecommunication institute through this arrangement. As a committee member, I bargained for more science training slots and I was able to attend the first PhD graduation ceremony at UCT. I was very happy when I saw my staff walk in the procession. I recall that Prof. Luhanga, Prof. Wole Soyinka and I were the special guests during the first graduation ceremony. I had met my goal of human capacity building for JKUAT.

It was during this time that we met the UCT Vice-Chancellors, Profs Sunderland, Ramphele Mamphela and Dr Njabulo Ndebele who also gave financial assistance to USHEPIA. The programme still runs with more universities but less funding. Personal commitment was the primary prerequisite for the success of the partnership. This was an excellent undertaking by a few selected vice-chancellors and I considered the training beneficial to our African universities which always relied on sending trainees outside the continent for staff development. Although the partnership did not stop further training in developed countries of the north and west, the few we trained strengthened our human capacity in the science and engineering disciplines. We still maintained the other linkages on course.

The Bilateral Agreement Between the Governments of Japan and Kenya

The Japanese government accorded substantial financial, technical and personnel assistance to JKUAT. Through the Japanese International Co-operation Agency (JICA), JKUAT benefited from this generous technical assistance for over two decades. In my earlier chapters, I wrote on the collaboration which started in 1977 to develop a mid-level technical college but which ended up creating a first-class fifth Kenyan public university. I was at the centre of its development and therefore accountable for JICA's technical assistance.

JKUAT gained in many ways: Staff training, technical assistance, capital infrastructure, provision of equipment, middle-level training, supply of project vehicles and assorted ICT components. The Japanese evaluation teams which visited the University used to be so impressed by the impact created by their support and the prudent use of their taxpayers' money that they kept on renewing programmes for over two decades. The teams recognized authority and funded projects on the strength of trust and proven individuals' integrity. The teams worked with individuals who were the key architects of change within the institutions.

I remember several occasions when the team leader of the programme, Prof. H. Nakagawa, would explain the aims of the project. He stressed technical assistance, exchange of ideas between Kenya and Japan and transfer of technology. We did not fully succeed in technology transfer. Even after training over 100 higher-degree personnel, we still lacked commitment to translate and own that technology.

Japanese people usually go out of their way to give the best of training. But the trainee or learner must be able to translate his/expertise into tangible results. The results are time-bound. Their training is industrial-based, and staff alternate from lecture halls to industry and vice-versa for a specified period of time. Practical-oriented courses have made Japan what it is now.

The support that JKUAT received through grants in aid, in addition to the government's subsidy, transformed the young university. We were training first-class industrially-based graduates who fitted in the job market soon after graduation. However, the many staff that finished their PhDs came back and were caught up in a myriad of local problems and even forgot the quality training that they had received. A few still display their talents but a large number have drifted into other activities which have diverted their concentration. The blame is not fully on them but on the large number of students to teach with absolutely no support facilities. The staff degenerate into mere lecturing with no practical activities. Upholding quality and high standards in academia is not only through lectures.

The current situation does allow for critical evaluation of what is taught and how it is taught. Lecturers have no time to spend in the preparation of their lecture materials. They do not engage tutorial fellows to follow up on what was taught earlier. Even when they are engaged, they get their pay after several months. I know of cases where they were never paid and quit for other places.

Professors who should be engaged in research and postgraduate guidance end up being loaded with several contact hours that they have no time to do quality academic work. They do not have consultation times. Worse still they cannot cope with the high number of students. Students at times are overcrowded and learn under very horrible conditions. This issue is discussed at length in another chapter.

For the thirteen years I worked in JKUAT, the interaction with my staff and those from Japan was so enriching that we used to have bonding outings yearly to learn the different cultures. The number of students and staff was small and we could

afford generous outings. I made several travels to Japan under the senior management training programmes. These were the only formal induction courses I attended during my tenure as a Vice-Chancellor. I met other senior managers from other countries, especially universities where JICA had collaborations, and share experiences. I learnt a lot in terms of management, financial appropriations and accounting, public relations and the management of crises. During my extensive visits, I was able to appreciate different cultures and food habits of far eastern countries.

I attended seminars. One conference exposed me to diverse Japanese phenotypes and I was able to spot out a native from Hokkaido Prefecture and another one from Okinawa. The conference was themed “The Crossing of Culture in the Eastern Pacific”. One belief which has been a hindrance to our own development is the misconception that time is elastic. Kenyans and, to a large extent in Africa, as a whole, people have no sense of time and that the importance of keeping deadlines. We have proudly coined our phrases and happily say ‘African time’ when one is late for more than two hours to a function. We have never appreciated the fact that late performance of an assignment contributes to underdevelopment. Time matters and time is all that makes a difference in one’s well-being.

In Japan, you are either on time or you get left behind. I learnt the importance of time management and continue to respect that virtue up to now. In fact, when I negotiated for the JKUAT project, I used time to gain mileage during the discussion. It was simply having the Japanese negotiating party come late and apologize. Once I accepted the apology, I knew in my mind that they were already in a positive but disturbed mind and I could make subtle references on the effect of lateness and that I would have been in another meeting. We would then expedite the negotiation matters.

I knew the Nairobi traffic jam could always delay meetings. African countries have yet to appreciate the power and implications of keeping time. Time wastage in traffic snarls and service counters is retrospective. I met many Kenyans in the management meetings and they proudly talked about the timely bullet trains from Tokyo to Hiroshima or Kyoto. I have yet to see timely movement of buses from Kampala to Nairobi or Dar-es-Salaam. We generally do not put into practice what we learn.

I am the patron of the Japanese Ex-Participants of Kenya (JEPAK). We always have conferences to discuss topical issues. We have been meeting for over 20 years and the total registered number is over 5,000. There are Kenyan people who have been trained in Japan and who have visited the country severally. I am a life member of JEPAK and have attended all meetings since inception. I listen to the informative deliberations on Japanese experiences.

The most eloquent speakers in Japanese language attend. They speak in that language and move the crowd. There are also fluent English speakers who express themselves in the most figurative manner as to how Japan shaped, taught and nurtured them.

I listen pensively and wonder when our country will be transformed even in one service only like healthcare so that ordinary people benefit. There are many obstacles to achieving what was learnt in a foreign land which cannot allow the ex- participants to practice the knowledge and skills acquired. This was true even for those who studied in the north and west. It is, however, noteworthy to mention that a good number of those who attended training for a long duration do practice certain skills for the good of the country.

Time-keeping is now catching up in Kenya; open office spaces and open door policy are now a norm.

Project completion period on a JICA-funded programme was always ahead of schedule. All structures which were put up by the Japanese assistance in JKUAT were always two to three months within schedule. They would be complete in time and await handing over. There was never any occasion of varying the contracts upwards or asking for extra days to complete the buildings. In Kenya, and indeed in many African countries, if a project is not re-valued upwards, and request for extension in completion period is made, then that project is 'aborted'. Nearly every government capital structure must beg for an extension and be valued upward. This was not the case in all the structures put up under the JICA technical co-operation.

As the University was becoming consolidated in academic programmes and building structures, I had an idea of forming an Eastern African organization. I needed a Centre for East Africa and eventually Africa as a continent. We created the African Institute for Capacity Development (AICAD).

The Offshoot of an Institute

The African Institute for Capacity Development (AICAD) is an international organization established in the year 2000, with its headquarters located at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT). We had to have some continuity before JICA finally disengaged with the University. The main goal of the institute is poverty reduction in the African region through human capacity development. The institute has three country offices at Egerton University (Kenya), Makerere University (Uganda) and Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania).

AICAD was initiated by the East African countries with support from the Government of Japan through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). I was the first chairman, having initiated the project. Its vision is: 'To be the leading African institution in building human capacity for poverty reduction', while its mission is: 'To link knowledge to application within communities in partner countries in Africa in order to reduce poverty'.

AICAD aims at achieving poverty reduction and socio-economic development by facilitating the indigenous people to solve their problems through:

- Utilizing existing knowledge and technology;
- Creating new technologies suitable for local conditions;
- Developing and utilizing the potential capacity of local expertise;
- Building a bridge between institutions creating technologies and the communities using them;
- Exchanging information, experiences and practices;
- Sharing human resources and information in the region and beyond.

AICAD collaborates with both governmental and private sector organizations such as universities, R and D institutions, industries, NGOs, community-based organizations, and government agencies/departments; and utilizes human resources and facilities in such institutions to advance its mandate.

AICAD pursues its mandate through its three mutually-interactive functions of Research and Development (R&D), Training and Extension (T&E) and Information, Networking and Documentation (IN&D). This interaction is facilitated through an administrative function, Administration and Finance (A&F) which provides logistical support and management of its human and physical resources. Its programmes range from in-country training targeting various community groups with problems, residential in nature and conducted at its headquarters and country offices, to grassroots training targeting community groups with specific development needs, non-residential and conducted at identified venues within the community. There is also knowledge and technology dissemination (KTDP) by which its research results are disseminated to target communities through various media including a training and community empowerment which embraces an integrated approach in which various identified community issues are addressed at the same time.

The main guiding philosophy in AICAD interventions is “*development for the people by the people*” using a bottom-up approach where identified community participants are accorded an opportunity to identify and prioritize areas in which they need assistance, with AICAD playing the facilitator role. This approach has been responsible for successful project identification, formulation, implementation, and sustainability of AICAD’s development initiatives.

My registrar, Mr Joel Mberia, and I realized that, at some point, the support from JICA would come to an end. I asked him to write a concept paper for presentation to the Resident Representative, Mr Eiji Hashimoto. We were very good friends and shared the same birthday. He would always remind me about it whenever we met. Hashimoto had all along supported our efforts to see JKUAT the best in the region. Mr Mberia and I made an appointment to see him since he was always jovial and welcoming whenever he saw us. I had hinted to him that we had some idea on what JICA could do to support JKUAT become a regional giant within Africa. We met him and went through the concept paper we had written and he bought the idea in principle.

That was the beginning of establishing AICAD. From there on, I embarked on perfecting my public relations and sold the idea to both the Senate and council. I had some strange resistance from some of members of Senate who wanted to know what the university's take would be. This was a strange notion since I had kept everybody in the know.

The Council was very understanding and President Uhuru Kenyatta, who was then a council Member, endorsed the move. I also held several meetings with the Japanese Team Leader who was also supportive. The word of the team leader meant a lot to the JICA headquarters as he was the most trusted professional in ensuring that the Japanese taxpayers' money was used well. AICAD's main objective was to be a training centre for East African researchers and scholars and over the years cater for the continent. We had five years' projections and JICA was willing to support the initiative by contributing to AICAD. I appreciated the support given by my colleague vice-chancellors, and the ministries of Education and Finance from each partner state.

My critical involvement in setting up the institute saw a robust working force of staff from each partner state. As the first manager, I made sure that we got a team which would promote the tenets of AICAD without compromising those of JKUAT. As I doubled up as the vice-chancellor and manager, I was able to second my reliable academic staff to AICAD to push its agenda. We were able to construct modern conference halls with the latest ICT facilities. I literally bulldozed the construction of 42 rooms for hiring to visiting researchers. The centre was detached from the main campus despite its physical location within. It was an institute within an institute which had all the necessary facilities for living.

I had to organize for an independent title deed for AICAD which made it an autonomous institute. I faced challenges from students and some staff when I announced the taking over of the games pitches. Students were on my neck and wanted to know the value and use of AICAD. I, however, convinced JICA to develop another site to accommodate all sporting facilities to replace the ones we had annexed. The university gained by having a well-landscaped games pitch with all the modern changing rooms and the provision of water. AICAD stands tall by the main entrance of the university and serves as a research, cultural and academic centre for the African continent.

The continuity of its functions relies heavily on the financial support of the partner states. I came up with a formula for each country to pay and support AICAD's activities. JICA was to oversee that the operations were in place before pulling out. This is one centre I am very proud of and which I started as a small project. It caters for the continent, but must have a forceful chief executive to design useful projects.

The Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA)

A closely related regional institution like AICAD which I enjoyed working for was the IUCEA. The East African Community which broke up in 1977 had several organs which were very useful and active. In 1980, the Vice-Chancellors of the three universities – Makerere, Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam – together with the permanent secretaries of the ministries of Education met and drew up a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) committing the three universities to work together. The MoU led to the transformation of the Inter-University Council (IUC) into the current IUCEA. When the community broke up, some institutions remained intact and IUCEA continued functioning. It was not, however, vigorous due to the weak involvement of some partner states. Academic co-operation, research and staff movement were not affected. The council used to meet seldom but functioned normally.

Initially, three countries – Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania – formed the community and committed funds for running the council. The IUCEA was therefore established by the three East African universities: Makerere, Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi. The function of the council was to provide avenues for working together and sharing experiences as was prescribed in the protocol which was signed by the three founding vice-chancellors. It was one of the best academic arrangements which existed after the collapse of the community and I had the opportunity to revitalize it.

I was the chairman of the IUCEA from 1996-2000, during which the three countries experienced an unprecedented growth of universities. Despite its continued services, the IUCEA had basically been dormant in its roles and the committees which were supposed to be in place had largely been absent. The then executive secretary, Mr. Erick Kigozi, whom I had the pleasure to work with, ran the council single-handedly. He, however, kept it functional whenever he could. The council had skeleton staff, and the Uganda government met most, if not all the running costs since it was housed in Kampala. During his farewell party, I acknowledged Mr Kigozi for keeping the functions of the council alive even after the 1977 collapse of the East African Community.

When I took over as the new chairman, the Association of Commonwealth universities, through a private consultancy, Commonwealth Higher Education Management System (CHEMS), requested that IUCEA roles be reviewed and revitalized to meet the challenges of the present-day demands in higher education. When I took over the chairmanship from Prof. Geoffrey Mmari, former VC of the University of Dar-es-Salaam, I accepted the challenges of reorganizing the council. Chairmanship rotates from one partner state to another and it was Kenya's turn.

In 1998 my committee was commissioned to carry out a study to establish how IUCEA could be revitalized, and develop strategies for its sustainability. The committee included representatives from the three partner states, with the secretariat in Uganda. I made sure that the two important ministries, Education

and Finance, were included. My earlier experience in the establishment of AICAD and the creation of Kenyan colleges during the double intake came handy. I was aware of the imminent tasks ahead noting that I was now dealing with three diverse government setups; leave alone the academic staff from several universities. It was, however, a pleasure to work with a typical academic group of people with one goal, the revitalization of the IUCEA.

A team of about 20 experts embarked on the task. We were given specific terms of reference, deadlines, and the budget was made available through the Kampala office. Our first meeting was held in Kampala where we drew up the plan of action and assigned ourselves roles which were specific to each state. We needed basic statistics and agreed to meet within one month. It was easy for me to co-ordinate the discussions through e-mails which were slowly being adopted.

It was a pleasure to work with people who respected deadlines and answered calls promptly. We had a total of eleven meetings with a final one being the launching of a revitalized Inter-University Council for East Africa in Arusha, Tanzania, the EAC headquarters. I chaired a meeting of all East African University Vice-Chancellors and their top management staff, permanent secretaries for the ministries of Education and Finance and senior staff from the community which culminated in the endorsement of our recommendations. The meeting suggested some changes which were useful for the strengthening of the council. I recall recommending the Republics of Rwanda and Burundi to join the council after the ratification of the community. It was a memorable day for me.

The salient recommendations included:

- The creation of a stronger body and staffing with appropriate academic qualifications;
- The inclusion of Rwanda and Burundi in the community;
- The preparation of a protocol to the East African Community making the council more powerful and independent within the region;
- Enhanced funding by each accredited university pegged on student populations;
- Enhanced funding by the partner states and clearance of outstanding arrears;
- Efforts to be made to fundraise externally among several friendly organizations identifying with IUCEA and which could willingly donate research funds;
- Encourage proposal writing for sourcing of funds and personnel;
- Increase staff and student exchanges across the region;
- Revitalize thematic groups/disciplines immediately;
- Claim the grabbed land of the IUCEA from the Uganda Government and put up a modern office facility with adequate guest and conference halls;

- Harmonize the academic programmes, especially secondary school/ requirements;
- Recruit the Executive Secretary competitively on a rotational basis as prescribed in the document we produced;
- Furnish the current offices with modern ICT equipment;
- Start a newsletter which would circulate widely amongst universities highlighting the academic events in the region;
- Enhance and encourage East Africanness in an attempt to live harmoniously even outside the academic sphere;
- Promote Kiswahili as a common regional language.

We all signed the document, presented it to the then Community Secretary General, Mr Francis Muthaura, who was very glad for the work well done within the stipulated period of three months. Among the very many recommendations made, several of them have already been achieved. As a continuing chairman of the IUCEA, I had to advertise and interview the Executive Secretary for the revitalized council. I had the same committee which included several Vice-Chancellors from sister universities who conducted interviews for the Executive Secretary. The terms of hiring and conditions of work were stipulated in the new document. The first executive secretary after the IUCEA was revitalized was Prof. Chacha-Nyaigotti-Chacha. He secured the position from among other applicants. Prof. Chacha took over the council and implemented most of the recommendations we made.

I cannot enumerate all of the glaring achievements made so far, but it is worth mentioning a few. The entry of Rwanda and Burundi into the Community was initiated by my committee. We always invited the countries as observers in all our meetings. The representatives from the two countries desired to be included in the academic activities of the region despite the prevailing communication hiccups. We got along very well. In fact their entry raised the profile of the IUCEA and eventually the cooperation and also assisted in financial contributions.

Other obligations which were met included: staff recruitment respecting the country quarters; funds were raised, for example, the ViCRES research project; a protocol was signed which fully integrated the IUCEA into the larger Community; the IUCEA land which had been grabbed was recovered and the headquarters was put up as passed; and, funding was enhanced by partner states. IUCEA is well respected and internationally recognized, and has enhanced funding by each accredited university with current offices being well connected via ICT. A newsletter is published regularly. These are but a few of the accomplishments that IUCEA has achieved. It is one of the strongest and most respected organs of the Community.

The final report was presented to the Vice-Chancellors and deans of partner universities. This was my joy as we got compliments for work well done and accomplished on time. I was later requested to present a summary of the report

to the Heads of State during the high-level summit meeting in Arusha, Tanzania. The then Foreign Affairs Ministers, Hon. Stephen Kalonzo of Kenya and Hon. Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania commended us for those institutions which stood the hard times as the community disintegrated.

The EAC was re-established by a treaty in November 1999 and it was recommended that the Republics of Rwanda and Burundi become members. My committee had made similar recommendations earlier on. The new EAC recognized the revitalized IUCEA as one of the surviving institutions of the community and would support it fully. A protocol was signed in 2002 making it a corporate entity under the EAC. My committee was appreciated for its efforts.

The revitalized IUCEA is now a well-established regional academic powerhouse manned by a team of about 40 talented and skilled personnel. My reflection on this organ of the community is simple. Scholars are known to relate and build bridges along their disciplines. IUCEA demonstrated this and did not care whether the community survived or not. Responsible academicians kept the organ going and ignored the political mess which was created by opportunistic and insensitive politicians. I was proud to be a part of those who saw the rebirth of the current East African Community and a very well-energized IUCEA

My personal involvement made a mark in my academic life as I witnessed my colleagues, Professors Chacha-Nyaigotti-Chacha and Mayunga Nkunya, steer the IUCEA to greater heights. They have both done a sterling job in putting the institution in the world map. Its funding from the partner states is timely and generous. It is the pride of the community as one of those organs which survived the breakup. I am happy to have been associated with it.

Two other international associations which I enjoyed being part of are the Association of African universities (AAU) and the Association of Commonwealth universities (ACU). The two bodies perform similar functions and bring together vice-chancellors to compare notes and discuss topical issues which affect them. The AAU, whose headquarters are in Ghana, organizes meetings on specific themes to be discussed. I recall the interesting stories told by various Vice-Chancellors on how staff and students caused havoc on issues which were common to all of us. The topics I enjoyed most were those dealing with quality education in our continent. The cries for additional funding for research and capital structures were common features by my colleagues. Inadequate government funding, hence the brain-drain, was an obvious topic which surfaced time and again.

I got a chance to meet many dignitaries and share the strategies of university management. In fact when I reflect on my experiences, I consider my management style reasonably better or above average compared to others. I heard of horrible stories amongst staff and students in some universities which I found strange and alien to Kenyan ones. The Association of Commonwealth universities is an elite academic club which brings all former British colonies together to

compare academic and political notes. As members, we used to meet in various Commonwealth countries and we would spend a week talking on all types of problems, issues, soliciting for scholarships, or simply networking. We used to invite powerful world leaders to give keynote speeches on topical issues.

I recall one such a meeting in Ottawa, Canada, where Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the then President of Tanzania (now deceased), gave a moving speech which covered education and poverty alleviation in the African continent. He moved the crowd when he equated the level of a country's development and the academic attainment. Developed nations spend more resources in education and research than those in economic transition. African states never learn or emulate facts which contribute to poverty reduction, he concluded. He further challenged the scholars present to persuade their governments to take up major problems which confront the continent. Nyerere was a great speaker and he inspired us all.

Mwalimu Nyerere, as he was commonly referred to, is known world over as a great leader who promoted socialism in the United Republic of Tanzania. His teachings which succeeded in making Tanzania one great, united country were promoted through the use of Kiswahili as a common language. He taught its citizens to live as brothers and sisters and one cannot easily identify them along tribal lines, which is common in the neighbouring countries. The language is now being promoted and adopted by several African countries, especially those in the Eastern African region.

His popular teachings through the media and public gatherings indeed made the country an envy of many as every Tanzanian you met referred to one another as brothers and sisters. He promoted education, social justice and equal citizenry. He preached humility, love for the country and a culture of respect for one another. Mwalimu Nyerere alluded to these tenets as he delivered his great speech to the scholars in Ottawa, Canada. He stressed that Vice-Chancellors had a big role to play in changing the world to make it a better place to live.

The late president is still remembered as a visionary leader who appealed for a United Africa along the likes of Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah. He steered the formation of the East African Community along with the late presidents Jomo Kenyatta and Milton Obote of Kenya and Uganda respectively.

"You teach the youth and have a chance to mould them to be better citizens," he echoed. Other countries which hosted the ACU meetings were the UK, Singapore and Malta. An interesting thing happened in one of the meetings held in Cyprus in 1999. Two of my Vice-Chancellor colleagues had to cut short the meetings and fly back to their respective universities because students were rioting and had taken over the streets in the cities. The VCs were recalled to go and handle the students. It was not a unique occurrence, I had been recalled once and my close friend, Prof. Francis Gichaga, former Vice-Chancellor of University of Nairobi, had been recalled on several occasions over students' riots.

The ACU meetings followed the agenda of the Heads of State meetings. The networking made it possible to secure scholarships, negotiate for staff exchange and sabbatical programmes. During these meetings, I was able to secure several scholarships for staff development. I was also able to fly high the name of my University, JKUAT, amongst the world giants. Commonwealth countries are so many that one could easily live up with great universities and strike academic business deals which would assist the younger colleges.

My own observation was that as a club, the ACU had enough comparative agenda to hold annual meetings. It was simply maintaining the colonial umbilical cord whose purpose I could not decipher. This is one conference that I think needs to be refocused. Yet the head office was in London which made it easy for ACU to continue with the practice of keeping the status quo.