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## Choosing a New Chancellor and a Successor

### **First Things First**

If I have anything worthy boasting about as Makerere's eighth Vice Chancellor, it must be the simple fact that I was perhaps the first incumbent Vice Chancellor ever to have participated in the selection and appointment of my successor since Makerere became a full-fledged university in 1970, and the sheer joy I derived out of the experience. My predecessors were not so lucky. Not only did they leave office more-or-less unceremoniously – some disappearing never to be seen again, the appointment of the Vice Chancellor was strictly the prerogative of the Chancellor. As we learnt earlier, the 1970 Makerere University Kampala Act, later amended by Idi Amin's decree of 1975 gave the Chancellor who, by the same Act had to be the Head of State of Uganda, absolute powers to appoint the Vice Chancellor and the Deputy Vice Chancellor; and in so doing, he consulted neither the Senate nor the University Council.

The Chancellor was at liberty to appoint any person of his choice he deemed fit to occupy that office, and only the Minister responsible for Education had a say in who was appointed. In most cases, the Minister did the search and forwarded the name to the Chancellor for consideration and appointment. That was the law then as enacted by the Obote I Government and, as we have seen, this seems to have been the trend in majority of Anglophone African countries. However, ever since the 1970 Act was passed, the university community, particularly the academic staff, had been fighting tooth and nail to have it repealed. The aim was to reduce Government control over the management of the university. Staff thought it was grossly unfair to sideline the important university organs – the Senate and Council when it came to the appointment of the chief executive officer of the university and other top officials. It took over thirty years to have the Act repealed.

Towards the end of 2000, the sixth Parliament passed an umbrella bill which repealed the Makerere University Act of 1970 and other statutes which were in existence at the time. The bill was given the obligatory Presidential ascent in March 2001, thus becoming the now famous Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001. Among other things, the new Act defined three main roles for the Vice Chancellor of a public university in Uganda, namely being responsible for the academic, administrative and financial affairs of the university. Under the old Act, the Vice Chancellor had no direct say in the university's financial matters. That was the reserve of the University Secretary. Although the Vice Chancellor was still appointed by and responsible to the Chancellor, the new Act changed the mode by which the successful candidate was arrived at. In theory, the Chancellor could reject a nomination submitted by the university, in practice the new Act reduced his or her role to just formalising the appointment; the Chancellor had no power to impose a Vice Chancellor on the university. For worse or for better, this was the fundamental break with the past that generations of Makerere staff had been waiting for.

Although I should have retired towards the end of 2001, the process of appointing my successor took much longer than we had anticipated. The unexpected delay kept me at the job for nearly two more years. Incidentally, those two extra years turned out to be very productive years for me and the university. The process of appointing my successor was slow, because we had no script, no cook book. We had to write every rule and procedure from scratch. The new Act provided the basic guidelines, but had also many lacunas which we had to fill and there was no precedence that we could use as a reference guide. The exercise was challenging but I was happy to have been part of it. Secondly, when the new Act came into effect on April 6, 2001, the President of Uganda ceased to act as Chancellor of any public university in Uganda. From that moment on, the role of the Head of State changed from being the titular head of every public university to that of a Visitor, which was essentially a supervisory role. The other responsibility for the Head of State under the new Act was that to appoint the Chancellors for the public universities from among the candidates presented to him by the universities. All universities had to identify suitable candidates, submit the names to the President through their governing Councils and wait for the outcome. Until Professor Apolo Nsibambi was installed in early 2004, the university was without its titular head, the Chancellor for all that time. As Vice Chancellor, I had to perform most of the Chancellor's statutory duties. This was the second time the Vice Chancellor acted as both Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of the university. However, the appointment of my successor was not one of them; that had to wait until the Chancellor was identified. By coincidence, the term of the old Council also came to an end with the coming into effect of the new Act. In effect, therefore, the university was operating without its main statutory organs.

As much as the new Act of 2001 was a welcome and long awaited change, I doubted whether we had prepared ourselves adequately for the tasks we were about to take on. The first challenge was to put together a new Senate. That was relatively easy since majority of the members came from within the university. Under the new Act, the membership of Senate was drastically reduced from about 110 to less than half of that number by eliminating all Heads of Departments and limiting its membership to Deans and Directors only. In addition, the Act gave each faculty/school/institute two representatives in the Senate, and these had to be at the rank of Professor or Associate Professor. Students, constituent colleges and institutions affiliated to the university were among the new constituencies the Act gave representation in Senate. The Government of Uganda was allocated two members. By early 2002, the new Senate was busy at work. The next, but potentially difficult step in operationalising the new Act was to put together a new University Council. In attempt to minimise the Government control over public universities and make them more accountable and truly representative of the communities they are supposed to serve, the new Act widened the participation and membership of the governing and decision-making Councils of public universities. It also defined who qualified to be a member. For example, members of Parliament ceased to be members of Councils of public universities and, for the first time, the academic staff associations, senior members of administrative staff as well as members of the junior support staff – through the National Union of Educational Institutions – each had a representation on the Councils. All Council representatives of these various groups had to be democratically elected through a popular vote. Interestingly, even the district where the public university was located had to be represented on the Council. The Minister responsible for Education could appoint up to three members from the general public.

The representation of the constituent and affiliated institutions on both Senate and Council presented an immediate and rather formidable problem as each institution had to be represented by the chairperson of its governing Council, the chairperson of its Academic Board, a representative of the staff and a student representative, a total of four people in all. Whatever the sixth parliamentarians who framed the new Act had in mind, this arrangement was obviously unworkable. As illustrated by the example below, instead of reducing the size of the Council, it did the opposite. At the time the Act came into force, Gaba, Katigondo, Alokurum National Seminaries and Makerere University Business School were some of the institutions affiliated to Makerere University, and each institution had four representatives on the Makerere University Council – a total of 16 members in all. The university was represented by just about ten people that included the Vice Chancellor and the two Deputy Vice Chancellors. In effect, the affiliated institutions made up the majority of the members of the University Council. The situation became a glaring mess at new Kyambogo University, which had about ten National Teachers' Colleges, over

sixty Primary Teachers' Colleges, four Uganda Technical Colleges and a host of Technical Institutes affiliated to it. It was now obvious that the Act needed urgent revision. In 2003, the Parliament of Uganda enacted the university and Other Tertiary Institutions (Amendment) Act of 2003. The subsidiary Act provided for the merger of the Uganda National Institute of Special Education, the Institute of Teacher Education in Kyambogo and the Uganda Polytechnic, Kyambogo to form Kyambogo University – the second public university in Kampala – and also amended some aspects of the 2001 Act which eliminated the representation of affiliated institutions on the Councils of public universities.

Some people have speculated that as a result of intensive lobbying, in an attempt to break away from Makerere but retain the name Makerere University, which according to some experts has a big street value, the law makers deliberately inserted the cumbersome clauses in the Act to suit the awkward position of Makerere University Business School (MUBS). Section 132 was another of such manipulations. That Section did not exist in the original draft. The original draft Act, drawn up by the Vice Chancellors of public universities, which were in existence at the time, offered the opportunity to review Section 131. What Section 132, which was inserted in the draft later, did was to create Makerere University Business School as a public tertiary institute affiliated to Makerere University, and task the National Council for Higher Education under sub Section 6 of the same Section to establish it fully as a tertiary institution as soon as the new Act came into force. That in effect meant that MUBS was administratively independent of Makerere University and had become a tertiary institution which, under the new Act, was a non-university institution. The academic programmes constituted the only link it had left with Makerere. Perhaps unknown to the drafters of the 2001 Act or simply an oversight on their part, by categorising it as a tertiary institution, MUBS lost its legal claim to the title “university”. Under Part 1 (Short Title, Interpretation and Objectives) of the Act, a tertiary institution is defined as any public or private institution, school or centre of higher learning other than a university, one of the objectives of which is to provide post- secondary education, offering courses of study leading to the award of certificates or diplomas. This technically meant MUBS was using the term “university” in its official name illegally. The Act also defined the relationship between an affiliated tertiary institution and the university it is affiliated to under Section 71. In fact, if the law had been followed to the letter or allowed to take its natural course, most of the time the energy consuming wrangles between Nakawa and Makerere, and the indignities which some of us had to endure for so long should never have happened. However, for reasons which at the time were beyond my comprehension, the authorities who were supposed to put an end to them looked on helplessly to the extent that some of us at Makerere were branded as the bad guys stifling innovative leadership at MUBS. I remember the many fruitless meetings I attended at the Ministry of Education, in the Parliamentary

Committee on Social Services and at the Prime Minister's office, supposedly trying to find a solution to a problem of their creation. To me, the failure to resolve the MUBS problem symbolised two things. It was either administrative incompetence or a deliberate attempt to keep the ambiguities in the law for the benefit of a few. It should never have happened in the first place.

The 2001 Act not only defined the composition and who was eligible to be a member of a public University Council, it introduced other new, but stringent requirements. Unlike the 1970 Act, the chairperson and the vice chair of the Council had to be elected from among the members, but not every member of the Council qualified to be elected to this important position. For instance, members of staff of the university, persons employed by the Public Service or a member of the District Council, were barred from holding the office of chairperson or vice chair of the University Council. The new Act also raised the quorum for a meeting of the Council to be legal from a third of the membership to fifty per cent, with at least five of the members present as neither employees nor students of the university. As we struggled to constitute a new University Council, we kept running into difficulty after difficulty. While Sam Byanagwa, who was then the Acting University Secretary, was able to mobilise all cadres of the University to elect their representatives, other constituents took long to do likewise.

The critical but difficult point was to identify people who fulfilled the new requirements for the position of chairperson and vice chair. That took time. It was not until December 2002, that the new Council was ready to hold its inaugural meeting. Contrary to tradition, the inaugural meeting was held in the Senate House, which had a much bigger conference hall than the Council room in the Main Building. It was also during that meeting the chairperson of the Council for the next three years was elected. After a free and fair election, Mr Gabriel Opio, who had served as Minister of State for Finance in the sixth Parliament, but now a private citizen beat his only rival, Mr John Muzeeyi Ntimba, by a very narrow margin and became the first chairperson of the University Council under the 2001 Act. Mrs Christine Kiganda, a prominent Ugandan educationist was elected unopposed as Vice Chairperson of the Council. Mzee John Ntimba became the Chairperson of the Appointments Board, which was now a specialised committee of the University Council. He would also play a critical role in the identification of my successor. Gabriel Opio's council laid the ground rules for the appointment of the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor and other senior officials of the university.

### **Identifying and Appointing a New Chancellor**

With the Council inaugurated, one of its first tasks was to write the rules that would guide the appointment of the new Chancellor and Vice Chancellor. The exercise required the input of both Senate and Council. We had to identify the Chancellor

first, who in turn would appoint the Vice Chancellor. Dr Colin Sentongo, who was then the Chairperson of the MUBS Governing Council, chaired the combined Senate-Council search committee, which identified three candidates from among the names which we had solicited from the public. Besides being individuals of impeccable integrity with a proven track record in their professional, academic or business fields, Council was looking for people who would not put too much demand on the university. They had to be people of reasonable economic means. Since the position of Chancellor is not a regular salaried position in the University Establishment, whoever was appointed would not draw a salary from the university; so the Chancellor had to be a person capable of supporting himself or herself financially. The incumbent only received small allowances whenever he or she had to perform certain official functions on behalf of the university. After submitting the three names to the Visitor, all we could do was to wait. When the results finally came back, the Visitor had appointed Professor Apolo Robin Nsibambi as Makerere's first non-Head of State Chancellor. We had to point out to him that his appointment as Chancellor had nothing to do with his position in Government as Prime Minister of Uganda. Even if he were to be dropped as Prime Minister, he would continue to serve in his capacity as Chancellor of Makerere University; being Prime Minister was just a coincidence.

Professor Nsibambi's inauguration ceremony as Chancellor on January 17, 2003 in the Main Building started off as a very colourful ceremony. Professor Gilbert Bukenya, the Vice President of Uganda and a former Makererean installed him on his ceremonial chair. However, towards the end, this colourful event was almost ruined by rowdy Government-sponsored students who, in their shameless way, had staged a demonstration outside the Main Building to demand their delayed allowances. They had blocked the university roads with huge tree stumps in an attempt to prevent the guests, including the Vice President from leaving. When it was time for the Vice President to leave, a scuffle broke out between the rioting students and the Vice President's Protection Unit. Some students were hurling stones at the soldiers and before we knew it, the Vice President's guards had started firing to disperse the crowds of marauding students. In the incident, a stray bullet bruised a female student who was in the Faculty of Social Sciences building. She had to be rushed to Mulago. Fortunately, the injuries she sustained were not life threatening; she survived to tell the tale. The colourful ceremony nearly turned into another black day in the university and God knows how it would have ended. Yet again, the students had taken their shocking rowdy behaviour to another ugly level. Many visitors had to leave hurriedly to avoid being injured by either flying stones or stray bullets. Even the reception at the Guest House was partially aborted, only a handful of guests attended. The following day, *The New Vision* newspaper carried a front-page report about what had happened at Makerere, describing it as Professor Nsibambi's baptism of fire. After years of no serious acts of indiscipline, the old ugly habits were making a come back!

### **Makerere's Ninth Vice Chancellor – The Process and the Results**

With a new Chancellor inaugurated, the guidelines written, debated in both Senate and Council and given a seal of approval, the next task for both Senate and Council was to identify my successor. My short contract was about to expire and yet a new Vice Chancellor had not been identified, so the University Council decided to ask the new Chancellor to renew and extend my contract one more time to allow time to complete the process of appointing a new Vice Chancellor. The Chancellor extended the contract to the end of June 2004 or until the new Vice Chancellor was appointed and ready to take over, whichever came first. After agreeing to the *modus operandi*, the stage was set for the ball to start rolling.

According to the 2001 Act, under Section 31, sub Section 3, the first step was to constitute a Search Committee composed of five members, two representing the University Council and three from Senate, with a task to identify five suitable candidates for the post of Vice Chancellor and forward the names to Senate. Senate had to choose and recommend three to the University Council. Although identifying the five Search Committee members was relatively easy, the issue of which of the two organs should provide the Committee's chairperson became a sticky point for a while. Senate argued that since it had the majority of membership, it followed logically that the chairperson should come from among its members. The University Council on the other hand argued that since it was the university's supreme organ and employer, it reserved the right to have one of its members chair the Committee.

Council carried the day and Dr Charles Wana Etyem, a private consulting civil engineer, was requested to chair the Committee. As we have seen, Charles Wana Etyem was no stranger to Makerere. He had been a member of staff and of the University's Appointments Board for many years. Senate was represented by Professor James Ntozi of Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics; Dr Edward Kirumira, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences; and Dr Florence Mirembe of the Faculty of Medicine. Dr Charles Wana Etyem and James Okello were the two University Council representatives. To avoid being accused of influence peddling, Professor Justin Epelu Opio and I decided to keep a safe distance from the activities of the Search Committee and anything to do with the appointment of the new Vice Chancellor. As we shall shortly see, it was a wise decision. Only Sam Byanagwa, the acting University Secretary, with a handful of his assistants were involved in the activities of the Committee, providing secretarial and administrative services. The rest of the senior administrators kept out of the Search Committee's affairs altogether.

Inevitably, the pace of work was initially slow as the Search Committee had to interpret and translate the criteria and terms of reference into working guidelines. It also had to identify five most suitable candidates from those who had responded to the advertisement. To make the process as transparent as possible, it had been

decided that the post would be widely advertised both locally and internationally, and for the first time, on the university's website. This was the first stage in a rather long process. The second stage was to shortlist candidates who met all the requirements for the job, based on a set of criteria the Committee had worked out on a score sheet. The third stage was oral interviews conducted by the Committee. The fourth stage was a 20-minute presentation by each candidate who had passed the interview. The presentations were open to the public and to whoever wanted to attend. The fifth and final stage was to select the five candidates suitably qualified for the job. The advertisement attracted thirty responses from as far away as Britain, Canada, USA, Nigeria, Ghana, India and of course Uganda, to mention a few. I later learnt that out of the thirty applications, only twenty four were complete. But when the PhD requirement and the minimum age of forty were factored in, two more candidates who did not meet those two requirements had to be dropped, leaving twenty two applicants in the race for the top seat in the tower.

At the shortlisting stage, the stakes were high. A candidate had to score at least seventy per cent to qualify for the interview stage. The committee shortlisted nine candidates, including a Ghanaian and a Nigerian. But as the Committee prepared for the next stage, rumours started flying high, accusing the Committee of deliberate bias and not giving women candidates a fair chance. In fact, it transpired that a highly ambitious candidate and apparently well connected to the political establishment, whose application the Committee had rejected for lack of a PhD, had taken the rejection of his application too personal and had gone as far as requesting a very highly placed political office in Government to intercede on his behalf to have his name included among the shortlisted candidates. We thought that was a despicable act, but I guessed that was how desperate some candidates were. It was becoming a hotly contested job.

Fortunately, the office this candidate approached for the special favour had decided to down-play his wild allegations, and not to interfere in the university's affairs, preferring to let the process take its course. We were not spared either. Apparently, Professor Opio and I had been naïve to assume that by keeping a safe distance from the activities of the Search Committee, we would be spared the wrath. We were therefore surprised to receive summons from the Inspector General of Government, accusing us of meddling in the process and favouring some candidates. These accusations came as a rude shock to both of us, but reminded me how much some candidates craved to be Vice Chancellor and how far they were prepared to fight anyone they thought or imagined was an obstacle to their march into the Vice Chancellor's seat. Fortunately, the accusations were proved to be false and in spite of the entire hullabaloo, Wana Etyem's committee pressed on with its work unperturbed.

The shortlisting done, the Committee was now ready for the interview stage. However, as soon as the Committee started interviewing the candidates, the process

was abruptly stopped, moreover in the middle of Professor Oswald Ndoleriire's interview. The reason given was that the Committee had deviated from the terms of reference. To make matters worse, at the time the Chairman of Council in the company of another member of Council intervened in the Committee's work, two of the candidates who had been invited for the interviews that day were waiting for their turns in the Chancellor's office. One of them was the late Professor John Bigala, who had been flown in from Swaziland at the university's expense. Professor John Opuda, who was next in line after Professor Ndoleriire, was waiting for his turn when the bombshell occurred. Other candidates who had been flown in from as far as the USA, also at the university's expense, were also waiting for their turns at the Guest House. Charles Wana Etyem had to excuse himself from the interview to come and answer the Chairman's concerns. Initially, he did not seem to have understood what the problem was all about, and was at pains to explain what his Committee was doing and how it was doing it. Charles Wana Etyem had been a long serving member of the university's Appointments Board which had established a reputation for impartiality and transparency. He had been drafted on the Search Committee and asked to chair it on the basis of his long experience and reputation as an impartial member of the Board. I am sure this saga must have come as a rude shock to him as it did to me. I was horrified to hear the litany of allegations being levelled against the Search Committee. Apparently, some of the candidates with consuming ambitions whom the Search Committee had dropped were not about to give up the fight. They had been busy lobbying anyone who had some influence at Makerere. There was even talk that the Search Committee had shortlisted only anti-Government candidates! Members of the Search Committee were horrified and viewed what their Chairman had been subjected to as blatant interference in their work. In response, they decided to stop the interviews, and so called off the entire search process indefinitely.

In their desperate attempt to play victim, some of the disgruntled candidates who had not made it beyond the shortlisting stage dragged the IGG into the Committee's work. They wanted him to investigate what they perceived as serious malpractices and unfair play on the part of the Search Committee. As part of the investigation, the IGG ordered the Search Committee to halt the process until he had released his report; but as we have seen, his order came after the Committee members had thrown in the towel. Professor Opio and I were also being investigated for whatever role we might have played in the search for the new Vice Chancellor. While all this was happening, Drs Charles Wana Etyem and Florence Mirembe tendered their resignation from the Search Committee. When the IGG published his report, his conclusion was that Professor Opio and I had not interfered in the Committee's work at all. Our decision to stay away from the Committee's work had paid off. Furthermore, the IGG concluded that, in spite of a few mistakes, the Committee had not done anything fundamentally or seriously wrong. Those who had interfered in its work were accused of meddling,

adding that if they had grievances, they should have waited until the Committee completed its work and submitted its report. It was only then that they should have raised their concerns, but not before.

The IGG's report was a big relief for me, because I was tired and eagerly waiting to have my successor named as quickly as possible. My concern was that the process could be thrown into an unnecessarily prolonged delay which could not only have augured well with the provisions of the new Act, but would have delayed my retirement much longer. Fortunately, reason triumphed and the search resumed, but this time with Mr John Ntimba as chair of the Committee. Mrs Josephine Wannyanu Mukasa, the Dean of the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Arts replaced Dr Florence Mirembe as one of the Senate representatives on the Committee. Unfortunately, as the new Committee began work, it became evident that some processes which Wana Etyem's Committee had completed had to be repeated, a double expense to the university, but on a positive note; this time there would be no interference, the IGG had put an end to it. From then on, the Committee's work proceeded uninterrupted. The score sheet was slightly revised, with a few items that the previous Committee had included for scoring scrapped; age was one of them. Wana Etyem's committee had argued that given the demanding nature of the job, the younger the appointee the better, so age was being scored on a sliding scale akin to the logarithmic scale, the younger applicants scoring higher marks than the older candidates.

The reconstituted Committee worked hard and fairly fast, and completed all the stages of the process. After the interview, the candidates made public presentations, *inter alia*, on their vision for the university they wanted to lead, held in the Main Hall. Given the sensitivity of the process, I kept away from the oral presentation, lest I would be accused again of meddling in the appointment of my successor. After the public presentations – a practice Sam Byanagwa borrowed from the University of Cape Town when we made a visit there in 2003 – the Committee was finally able to identify the five candidates for Senate. The Committee completed and submitted its report to Senate on April 30, 2004. The Search Committee's work was done, save for the chair to present the report to Senate. Again, history had been made. It was now the turn of Senate to do its bit as demanded of it under the new law, and here the incumbent Vice Chancellor was in charge.

Senate convened in the usual Senate conference hall in the Senate House to consider and discuss the report in May 2004. It was a full attendance and I was chair. However, before I made the call for this historical meeting – perhaps the most important and critical Senate meeting I had ever chaired – I had given considerable thought to the mammoth task ahead of us and how we would execute it. I was also keenly aware that Senate was about to set precedence. Years of persistent pressure to have the 1970 Act repealed had brought us this far and

for the first time in Makerere's history, Senate was about to participate in deciding who would lead this great institution for the next five years. The old tradition of which I was a part was about to give way to a new era. During Professor George Kirya's time in the 1980s, we had changed the way Deans, Directors and Heads of Departments were appointed and how long they would stay in office. Democracy had replaced the old system of appointment and term limits had replaced the practice of Dean or Head of department for life. That revolutionary idea was now about to be extended to the topmost positions of Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor.

For reasons I cannot explain, I found myself frightened of the unknown that was unfolding before me. Would we make the right choice? What if we went wrong? Would the university slip back into chaos? When I say that was the first time we were participating in such an important exercise, I want to believe that I was speaking for the majority of members of Senate. The chief question on my mind was how do we select the final three candidates from the five? I read the Act over and over again to make sure I fully understood what exactly Senate's role was. Unfortunately, I could not find an answer in the Act which I could call satisfactory beyond what I already knew that we had to forward three names to the University Council. I settled for the lazy man's solution; let Senate figure out the solution. I even reminded myself that as chairman, I was not supposed to bias Senate with my personal opinions. My role was to guide the debate. If there were no rules and the Act was silent on the *modus operandi*, Senate had to invent them and that was what we did.

At the beginning of the big and historic Senate meeting – the *kachoke matidi* – as my Lwo speaker friends would call it, we requested all members who were either candidates or who had applied for the job, but had been eliminated at one of the stages, to leave the Senate chamber. Then we asked the Academic Registrar, who up to that moment was keeping the Search Committee's report under lock and key, to distribute the copies to members. We had not distributed the copies of the report ahead of the meeting because we were afraid the report, which contained a lot of confidential personal information and the Search Committee's assessment of each candidate, would leak to the press. Mr Ngobi had actually managed to keep the report tightly confidential, a remarkable feat at Makerere where confidentiality of sensitive information was a thing of the past. Senators were given time to read the most important sections of the report. I called the meeting to order and the debate began.

Mr John Ntimba, the chair of the Search Committee led off the meeting with a presentation of the Committee's report. Senate listened attentively as he went through the resume of each candidate, the Committee's observations and conclusions on each one of them and how the Committee had arrived at the final five names. At the end of his presentation, it was time for Senate to take over

from where the Search Committee had ended. The critical challenge which faced Senate at this point was how to decide on the final three names from amongst the five candidates, who included a Nigerian and four Ugandans, all full and some senior professors.

The Search Committee had ranked the five candidates according to how they had performed during the various stages of the search process. I opened the debate and after intense deliberations, and the legal interpretations presented by the University Senate Lawyer, on the relevant sections of the Act, Senate reached the conclusion that according to the Act, the Search Committee's responsibility was just to identify five candidates it considered qualified to be appointed Vice Chancellor. Secondly, Senate was not bound to make its final decision based on the Search Committee's rankings. The rankings were meant to guide the Committee to arrive at the final five candidates. That phase had ended the moment the Committee submitted its report to Senate. Therefore, as far as Senate was concerned, all five were at par and had to be treated as such. Thirdly, we were reminded by the Lawyers that Senate was not a passive participant in the process. With consensus on these potentially contentious issues reached, we had jumped the first hurdle. The next and perhaps the most controversial step was to agree on the best method of arriving at the three names.

After lots of arguments and counter-arguments, Senate finally settled for a secret ballot, a replica of the process by which Deans, Directors, their deputies and Heads of Departments were elected. To ensure transparency and neutrality, the Dean of Students, John Ekudu, who was not a member of Senate, was asked to serve as returning officer. It was now decision-making time through our ballot papers. At the end of the exercise, Senate had identified the three names, two Ugandans and a Nigerian. To my surprise, the Search Committee's top ranked candidate was not one of them. To be sure that nothing was amiss and there were no dissenting voices, at the end of the exercise, I took liberty to ask the Senators whether the final outcome was the true reflection of their thinking and wish. The answer was a resounding yes. That was the end of the story. We then instructed the Academic Registrar to collect all the copies of the Search Committee's report from the Senators, as they contained very personal information which we did not want to fall into unauthorised hands, and file a report to the University Council with the names of the three candidates to Senate, as the Act stipulates. In less than six hours, another piece of history had been made at Makerere. By one o'clock in the afternoon, the meeting was over and my job done. I left immediately for another meeting at Entebbe. That was the last Senate meeting I chaired.

The acting Academic Registrar, Mr Ngobi, was as efficient as usual. He quickly wrote up the report for Council. In less than a week after the famous Senate meeting, the report was sent to the Councillors. The Chairperson of the University Council, Mr Gabriel Opio, quickly fixed a special meeting of the

University Council to finalise the process. When Council met for yet another history making meeting; nineteen out of the twenty three members were present. After the Academic Registrar had presented the Senate report, followed by a brief but thorough discussion, the University Council too opted for the secret ballot. This time the university's Legal Officer, Janefrancis Nabawanuka, acted as the returning officer. When the tally was done, I realised that it could have gone to any one of the three. Any of the three candidates could have become the next Vice Chancellor as the votes were evenly distributed, six, six, seven. The seventh vote saved the chairman the agony of having to cast a tie-breaker. That was how tight the bid for my former job was. And the winner was Professor Livingstone Serwadda Luboobi, another first for the Faculty of Science. Professor Luboobi is one of the best mathematicians Makerere has ever produced and I was happy to see him emerge as the candidate of choice as my successor. With the new Vice Chancellor identified, the countdown to my retirement had begun in earnest. The next stage was for the University Secretary to compile a report for the Chairman of Council who would, in turn, forward it with the name of the successful candidate to the Chancellor for formal appointment.

One of Professor Nsibambi's enduring attribute is efficiency and meticulous time keeping. He hardly procrastinates over decisions. Therefore, it did not come as a surprise when he took just about three days to approve the Council's choice and to issue the Instrument of Appointment to Professor Luboobi. After a decade plus, Makerere University had a new Vice Chancellor. On June 1, 2004, I handed over the office to the new Vice Chancellor in a simple, but emotional ceremony held in the Council Room. After the handing-over ceremony, Mr Gabriel Opio, the Council chairman officially installed him. I wished him the best of luck in his new and challenging job and left. I was now part of the larger world. I did not have to make the big decisions, attend meeting after meeting, globe trot and be kept at the nerve edge all the time by both staff and students. But I could not help feeling sad, leaving behind the many colleagues who had been so nice to me and in the process made my work an everyday exciting experience; and above all, my efficient and dedicated office staff, Euphemia Kalema, Helen Kawesa, Dorcas Muhiirye, and Mary Seremba. But as they say, we come and go. I had come, it was now time to exit. All I can say about my successor, as a concluding remark, is that in some way, both of us made history in the annals of Makerere. Both of us came from the Faculty of Science. Professor Luboobi was the first Vice Chancellor at Makerere to be appointed under the new system based on the 2001 Act. I was the last Vice Chancellor to be appointed under the old system based on the 1970 Act. It was a pleasure to have served that great institution as its chief academic and administrative officer. I only hope that my best was good enough.

