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## My Experience: The Return to Makerere

### **My Long Years at Makerere as Vice Chancellor (1993 – 2004)**

“We have decided to send you back to Makerere as the next Vice-Chancellor”. These were the words of Minister Amana Mushega when I met him at a meeting at the International Conference Centre on September 20, 1993; and they are still fresh in my memory. Towards the end of August 1993, I was selected to accompany Mr Eriya Kategaya, who was then First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, on a study visit to Bangladesh. The other members of the delegation were Mr David Pulkol who was then the Deputy Minister of Education and Sports and Johnson Busingye (now deceased) who was at the time the District Education Officer of Bushenyi. The purpose of the visit was to learn about the Grameen Micro-finance and the educational programmes for rural poor communities, which Dr Muhammad Yunus had established in Bangladesh, and to assess the possibility of replicating them in Uganda.

On our way back from Dhaka, we had a stop-over at Addis Ababa Airport. The Ethiopian Government officials arranged for Mr David Pulkol and his delegation to wait for the Entebbe flight at the VIP lounge. Mr Kategaya had left us behind in Dhaka for a trip to Europe, so Mr Pulkol was now the leader of our delegation. For some reason, as we waited for our flight, the topic of dismissing senior Government officials over the radio came up. We thought that the practice of doing things in an uncivilised way had ended with Idi Amin, pointing out that the affected officers had a right to know their fate before the public did. Jokingly, we then referred to ourselves, saying that perhaps by the time we got home that afternoon our jobs might be long gone. Mr Pulkol looked at me and laughed loudly, which left me a bit worried. He then assured us that, as far as he knew, we were secure in our jobs. However, I could not help wondering why he had

looked at me in that peculiar way and then laughed so loudly. However, I did not dare probe further, as he was one of my bosses. Later, it happened that before he left for Bangladesh, Mr Amanyu Mushega had discussed with him the changes he intended to make at Makerere and my name had featured prominently among the possible successors to Professor Kajubi. He was just not ready to let the cat out of the bag in Addis Ababa, so he did not volunteer any clues as to what was in the offing for me. As it happened later, I now believe he was guarded, because he did not want to take responsibility for leaking the information prematurely, in case the Minister changed his mind while he was away. When we got back to ITEK, I did not sense anything unusual. I just went about my work as usual. Then one Thursday afternoon, Minister Amanyu Mushega invited me to a meeting he was going to address at the International Conference Centre. I had to see him first before the meeting.

I have had so many surprises in my life that it seemed there was nothing that could ever surprise me anymore. Even my very survival as a child was a small wonder. My mother conceived me at an advanced age of 35. She had been childless until she brought me into the world. Unfortunately for her, I came out of the womb early, a month and a half prematurely, so I had to be kept in an incubator at Nsambya Hospital. When I left hospital, my mother was given a rubber hot water bottle to keep me warm. I used such a hot water bottle again in Belfast in the 1970s as a graduate student. However, as if that was not enough trouble for my mother; when I was about a year old, I developed a mouth ulcer in the upper jaw, which almost failed to heal. Thanks to modern medicine and to my mother who strongly believed in it, the ulcer healed. Then, when I was in Grade Three at Gaba Primary School, I contracted whooping cough which almost killed me. In fact, some of the doctors had told my father that I had almost no chance of surviving. Thanks to my father's perseverance. I lived to tell the tale. That same year, the Headmaster was looking for a school time-keeper. I was tested for clock reading with other boys who were much older than me. Fortunately for me, I passed the test and become the youngest school time-keeper at the age of ten. I did this job for three years and, even when I battled with whooping cough, the school authorities still retained me as the official time-keeper.

There was even some talk about promoting me from Grade Three to Grade Five but the idea was later dropped. Perhaps I would have set a precedence in the school, which had never fast-tracked a student before. My guess was that some teachers were apprehensive that if I did not live up to expectations, it would set a bad precedent. When I was in Grade Five, my class teacher then was one of the two teachers in the school who could teach English (the rest were vernacular teachers). He used to ask me to help him mark the English homework of his Grade Four pupils. In 1961, my final year at Gaba, twenty-one of us sat for the Primary Leaving Examination, which was then the first public examination in

the education cycle. When the results were released, only three of us had passed – a girl and two boys. I happened to be the best of the three. The rest of the class failed. The girl and the second boy happened to have joined Gaba Primary School in Grade Five. Technically, it meant I was the only lucky one to have passed among the original eighteen pupils.

When I joined St Peter's Junior School at Nsambya in 1962, I had no money for school lunch. So, I used to go without lunch in spite of the fact I had to commute to school every day on foot from Kawuku-Gaba to Nsambya, a distance of almost seven miles. Then one day the Headmaster, Father Jones, called me to his office and asked me why I was not eating lunch at school. After explaining my problem, he told me to start eating lunch and that he would pay for it. I thought I had misheard him, so I ignored his offer. I did not believe he could allow me to have free lunch; after all there was no such a thing as free lunch, someone had to pay for it. Apparently for reasons best known to him, he had developed a keen interest in me.

When Father Jones discovered I was still not eating the school lunch, he called me again and inquired why I had disobeyed him. This sent a chill down my spine. I attempted an explanation in self-defense, only for him to tell me that he was aware of my financial problems – the very reason he allowed me have free lunch. I was puzzled how the headmaster had found out about my problems! Perhaps when he looked at my fees payment record, he must have discovered that I was not paying for lunch. I never knew who else benefited from Father Jones's generosity the same way I did.

In my second and final year at Nsambya, the Headmaster singled me out as the next school time-keeper. I complained that I lived far from the school and that it would be difficult for me to be on time every morning. He quipped back and said that he had never seen me come late and therefore saw no reason I should start coming in late when I was the timekeeper. Again, I was left speechless. I sat for the Junior Leaving/Senior Entrance Examination in 1963, at the end of what used to be called Junior Two. Namilyango College was the dream of every Nsambya boy, but it was a highly competitive school too. A first grade was not good enough; it had to be a good first grade. In my year, six students out of a class of forty-four at Nsambya made it to Namilyango. To my big surprise, I was one of them. At Namilyango, I ran into all sorts of personal problems; some of a psychological nature, others social I could not explain. I also developed constant dull headaches, which had an effect on my academic performance as I could hardly concentrate for long hours.

“Winter time”, the jargon for the school examination period, was always the worst time for me. However, very few friends were aware of my agonising condition. Apart from this set back, there were two surprises waiting for me. At the end of Senior Two, some students were selected to take Physics and Chemistry

as separate subjects. Students used to call this combination the “Pures”. Selection for these subjects was based on exceptionally good performance in both subjects and Mathematics. I was one of the lucky students selected for this combination. Students weak in the two subjects and Mathematics were only allowed to take Physics with Chemistry combination. In Senior Three, I was once again appointed school time-keeper, together with my friend John Chrisestom Sentamu, for a period of two years. I could not help wondering why school time-keeping and I had become synonymous with each other for so many years! Although I passed my examinations, there was always room for improvement. Finally, I made it to Makerere, but with a lot of struggle. Interestingly, at Makerere, I regained much of my academic flare. Makerere years were my best years. All my social and psychological problems disappeared.

After one year at Queen’s University, Belfast, I was informed that my MSc work had been upgraded to a PhD thesis. I could not believe I was exempted from the MSc and I was proceeding straight to a PhD, even though I had gone to Belfast for an MSc. I was able to complete and defend my thesis within three years, which was the mandatory minimum time a student was allowed to spend on the PhD thesis. Some of the students I started the programme with and a few who were a year ahead of me were still struggling to complete their theses. Moreover, I was the only black student in my group. To make things even more surprising for me, I was offered a postdoctoral fellowship appointment in the same department before I had completed writing up my thesis and defended it. In fact, one could call me a predoctoral postdoctoral fellow. At the same time, my supervisor, Professor Frank Glockling, had secured an extension of my visiting studentship, which I had to turn down in lieu of the postdoctoral fellowship, which paid me more than the studentship.

I had managed to publish some of my work in the journal, *Nature*, which is one of the topmost premier scientific journals in the world. Several papers published in this journal have gone on to win the Nobel Prize. I was really proud of my paper in *Nature*, a highly coveted journal which also has a reputation for its high rejection rate. I also published another paper in the journal, *Inorganica Chimica Acta*, edited in Switzerland. This paper attracted worldwide attention and I received several requests for its reprints from all over the world. When I submitted it, I had no idea that it would have that kind of impact on the international scientific community. I published many more later, but they did not have the same impact as these two papers. I also succeeded in publishing papers in good and renowned journals which were not on the same level as *Nature* but which, nevertheless, were also journals of good international standing. One of such journals is the *Transactions of the Japan Institute of Metal*. At Makerere, I successfully supervised several MSc and PhD students while many of my senior colleagues had never supervised a single postgraduate student. In fact, some of

my students published papers out of their work in international peer-reviewed journals. I was also peer-reviewing papers submitted for publication for some journals. As a young upcoming academic, this was not a record I was really upbeat about. Therefore, I was no longer surprised by anything new happening to me. I had seen it all, so I thought; but I was in for another rude shock.

When Amanywa Mushega invited me to the International Conference Centre to break the news to me that Government had decided to send me back to Makerere as Vice Chancellor, it was a different story. I simply gaped and stood there motionless, not knowing how to handle the news. It was too much for me. Was this another big joke the Minister was playing on me? After all, April Fool's Day had long past; this was September. For sure, the Minister was not pulling my leg. It was real. What was really going on with me? I was sure the Minister did not mean what he said and if he did, he had simply mistaken me for someone else! As I have said before, I sincerely believed that by now, I was immune to surprises, but as a mother will tell you, "every child comes with its special labour pain" and no woman ever gets immune to labour pains. It does not matter how many children she has given birth to before; every labour is excruciatingly painful. Likewise, a human being is never immune to surprises and, indeed, life is full of them.

The one thing I was least prepared for was the top-level executive job at Makerere. As I have said, the job was too demanding, too risky and too insecure. After that short meeting at the International Conference Centre, the Minister told me the Chancellor was going to make an announcement the following day, so I should get ready to leave for Makerere immediately. How about Professor Kajubi? Was he informed of the changes or was he going to hear it over the radio? I asked. No, the Minister replied, the President had invited him to his upcountry home in Rwakitura and had briefed him on the changes. Then, I remembered why David Pulkol had laughed at me at Addis Ababa airport.

Some years back, I had read in an American publication about the Apollo 11 Astronauts. The writer of this story said that when Astronaut Dr Boldwin Buzz Aldrin learnt that NASA had selected him for the first Apollo 11 moon-landing mission, and that he would be the second man to set foot on the moon, he almost failed to inform his family. It was after his wife, Joan, sensed that something seemed to be terribly wrong with her husband who had lately began acting withdrawn, that Buzz revealed the big secret to his wife. I was almost in a similar situation. I nearly failed to tell Alice the news. It was as if I was on a mission to Mars without a rocket. I did not know whether I should be happy or sad! Like Buzz Aldrin, I went home that evening acting withdrawn.

As I anticipated, the announcement of my appointment as Makerere's new Vice Chancellor on Thursday, September 23, 1993 drew mixed responses from Makerere and the public at large. The People newspaper, then the mouthpiece of the Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC) was quick to brand Professor Epelu Opio

and myself as Museveni's sycophants. My appointment as Vice Chancellor had taken many people by total surprise. I later learnt that, at Makerere, a change in the top leadership of the university had been expected, but not in the way it happened. I had been barely away from Makerere for three years and not much was known about my work at Kyambogo. It was therefore understandable why my appointment took many by surprise, including my old time friends. In the midst of it all, the critics were busy at work. Many were heard calling into question why such a junior person like me had been elevated to such a position, and asking questions like, for instance like, "How had he become a Professor? What managerial experience if any, was he bringing to the job? Was he not being rewarded for denouncing MUASA's action a few years earlier?" The questions were endless but legitimate. Frankly, I too was inclined to think along the lines as the critics. I had never applied for the job or for the promotion. I felt a little inadequate for my new job. Makerere was not comparable to ITEK. In reality, ITEK was a dwarf compared with Makerere University. Some who knew how to gaze in the crystal ball had predicted that I would not last more than three months at the job.

Apparently, the appointing authority knew better and, secondly, I was not the first person to be promoted in this way. I recalled that in 1989, when I was Head of the Department of Chemistry, Bernard Onyango had written a letter to the Vice Chancellor, Professor George Kirya about me. I was not supposed to have seen this letter, but a kind secretary who was excited by its content, took me in confidence and showed it to me. She insisted it was for my eyes only. What Mr Onyango had written about me was too good to be believed. In essence, he was telling Professor Kirya about what he thought were exceptional leadership qualities he saw in me and was urging him to speed up my promotion to full professorship. I have never figured out what prompted Mr Onyango to take this exceptional and unusual decision to write such a letter to the Vice Chancellor. As we have seen, Mr Onyango was always careful and well-guarded in what he had to say; therefore, for him to have written a letter of this kind to the Vice Chancellor about me was untypical of the man. Perhaps, as an experienced administrator, he had noticed something exceptional in me I was unaware of. What was the fate of that letter? Again, I do not have the slightest clue, because I was not supposed to have known. At the age of 46, I was probably one of the youngest people to occupy this position at Makerere. In fact, I later realised that, for this job, being young was an advantage. In real life, some things happen to individuals which are simply impossible to understand and to explain, and perhaps best left unexplained. It is little wonder that people believe in some form of supernatural force. Some call it "fate". They believe that life is a journey with pre-determined milestones. There are milestones in everyone's life and no individual can change them. As my new appointment continued to perplex me, I wondered whether, after all, the fatalists had a point. Was this supposed to be my fate? However, I was to learn later from

my old friend, class and roommate at Namilyango and the Prime Minister of Uganda at the time, Cosmas Adyebo (now deceased) that my appointment and promotion were neither accidental nor based on any peripheral considerations as some people thought. He told me further that before Government considered me suitable for the job of Vice Chancellor at Makerere, they had done some serious detective work on me.

My record at Makerere and ITEK had been scrutinised. So also were my public relations and ability to solve problems, including doing more with less, as well as the record of my scientific published works. He therefore, assured me that I was not a blind choice, that there were qualities they were looking for in the new Vice Chancellor and they were convinced I possessed most of them. In short, they were looking for a good manager for the university; therefore, there was nothing for me to worry too much about. In the end, I took my friend's advice and accepted the challenge. However, I knew that what I was taking on was no mean challenge. ITEK had been hard to sort out, but the challenge of running Makerere was likely to be much harder.

As soon as my appointment as the new Vice Chancellor of Makerere University, with Professor Justin Epelu Opio as Deputy Vice Chancellor was announced, the Editor-in-Chief of the New Vision dispatched a team of young journalists to my residence at Kyambogo. Some of the questions they asked were about the plans I had for Makerere, I could hardly provide them with intelligent answers, because I was still dumbfounded and not prepared for the new job yet. I murmured a few things, which they jotted down and left. I was not ready for journalists yet, and needed plenty of time to recover from the shock and think straight. At that time, my new job looked like mission impossible. Moreover, I was still lamenting the unfinished work and the friends I would be leaving at Kyambogo. On the other hand, I was happy to learn that Professor James A. Lutalo Bosa had been named my successor at ITEK. I had worked with him when he was Dean in the Faculty of Science at Makerere before he was appointed Deputy Vice Chancellor. So, I knew him very well. The man was a workaholic, a performer, an honest and totally dependable person. I was therefore leaving ITEK in safe hands. It was time to prepare for the hand-over. Nevertheless, it took me time to pluck up the courage to leave for Makerere. When my wife realised I was procrastinating, she asked me if I was waiting for the Minister's *kasuzekatya*. In the Kiganda culture, *kasuzekatya* is the gift that the bridegroom must present to the bride's parents early in the morning of the wedding day for them to release the bride. When I started receiving telephone calls from the university asking me to attend to important matters, I realised it was time to go. In any case, Professor Lutalo Bosa was also waiting for the hand-over. I promptly organised a handing-over ceremony with an incomplete handing-over report. On October 12, 1993, I bade farewell to my colleagues and left Kyambogo for Makerere. I left with plenty of fond memories.

The Makerere I left in 1990 had in many ways changed for the better, thanks in part to the findings and recommendations of the Sendaula Visitation of 1990, but I was also acutely aware of the challenges that lay ahead of us. Some of the old problems, like the quest for a living wage and students' indiscipline and lack of respect for the university administration were still very much alive and waiting for us. In fact, we did not have to wait long before we had a taste of the things to come. Therefore, I had no qualms about my new job. I was replacing a Vice Chancellor forced to leave office simply because staff, students and Ministry of Education and Sports officials attributed many of Makerere's ills to him. Ostensibly, he left Makerere a bitter man, but also as a poor administrator.

As the Sendaula Visitation Committee of 1990 observed in its report to the Chancellor, both staff and students held the view that the Vice Chancellor and his administration were their enemies. The allegation was that the university administration under Professor Kajubi had failed to take care of their welfare and was perceived to be indifferent to the plight and grievances of both staff and students. The university was split right down the middle. On the one hand were the academic staff and students and on the other were the Vice Chancellor and the university administration. As we have seen, on top of all this turmoil, there was a very strong undercurrent of the multiplicity of power centres which had sprung up all over the university, first during Professor Kirya's time, and had continued even in Kajubi's time. This under-current was responsible for much of the turmoil the university had experienced in the last four years. Sendaula's Visitation Committee identified the power centres as the Students' Guild; the Academic Staff Association (MUASA), the Workers' Union; the Administrative Staff Association and the Resistance Councils.

Before the NRM came to power in 1986, some of these power centres existed but only in name. However, in the new environment of free speech, they had become powerful, vocal and assertive. When I arrived at Makerere, my first impression was that the university was deceptively peaceful; so one had to tread cautiously, as the volcano could erupt again at any time. Of course, much of my fear proved to be unfounded. The majority of the Makerere community genuinely welcomed our appointments. I think they too were somehow tired of unending chaos and confusion and the frequent but unproductive confrontations with Government.

Professor Kajubi was kind enough to prepare a comprehensive hand-over report that served as my guide as I tried to settle in the office and to get to grips with the nitty gritty of the university's administration. The secretaries I had left behind three years earlier, Dorcas Muherya and Mary Seremba, were still there and were to remain with me for almost 11 years of my time as Vice Chancellor. Professor Justin Epelu Opio, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, was an old friend whom I had known when he was Head of the Department of Veterinary Anatomy, and when

he was working on a project funded by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Under this project, he had acquired a Russian-made car and I used to tease him about the funny look of his car. When the President appointed him to head the Teso Presidential Commission, which helped Government to pacify Teso, he was a frequent visitor at ITEK. He used to come to address students from the Teso region on the peace initiatives his Commission was spearheading. Through those interactions, I came to know him a lot better. He is a highly intelligent man, thorough in his work with an acute eye for fine detail as any good anatomist would be. He also had a lively personality, and was an avid tennis player. As things turned out, over time he became my right-hand man. Reverend David Sentongo, the University Secretary; Mr George Kihuguru (or “Uncle George” as generations of students used to call him), the Dean of Students; Mr Garshom Eyok, the Senior Deputy Academic Registrar and Mr Ben Byambazi, the University Bursar were all there. I had worked with all of them before I left for Kyambogo. Having them around as part of the team made my settling in a lot easier, although as I have said before, I was somehow under pressure to replace them, because most of them had reached the mandatory age of retirement.

Dr Mukwanason Huhya who had taken up the position of Academic Registrar a few months prior to our appointment was the only new person on the team. Dr Huhya and I joined Makerere in the same year as undergraduate students in 1970. We were also in the same faculty. He read Statistics and Economics. After graduation in 1973, he won a Commonwealth scholarship tenable in Canada and proceeded to Simon Frazer University in British Columbia for a Master of Arts degree in Economics, after which his scholarship was extended. He then moved to the University of Alberta at Edmonton for a PhD in the same discipline. When he completed his PhD, Uganda was still in political turmoil, so he decided to join the University of Dar es Salaam (UDS), as a lecturer in Economics. He remained at UDS, rising to the rank of Associate Professor and Deputy Dean of his faculty. He was one of the Ugandan economists who, in the late 1980s, was fielded by the World Bank as consultants to advise the Uganda Government on its macro-economic policies, prior to the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme, (SAP). By the time the World Bank consultancy ended, the position of Academic Registrar at Makerere had fallen vacant, after the retirement of Mr Bernard Onyango. When it was advertised, Dr Huhya was one of the applicants. He beat all the other applicants at the interview and got the job. As a World Bank consultant, he was earning a handsome salary, paid in hard currency. The salary attached to the job he had applied for at Makerere was far less; almost a tenth of what he was earning on the World Bank job. This had made the then Vice Chancellor and his colleagues at the university doubt whether the man was really serious. But he was. Dr Mukwanason Huhya was in fact the first PhD holder and the first Muslim to occupy this position. In my opinion, I had a good management team I could rely on for good decision-making and from whom I could draw

inspiration. As far as I was concerned, the old colleagues represented continuity and the new, a fresh start. Contrary to my fears, the warm reception extended to us by the university community took much of the sting out of my initial fears.

Besides a good management team, the old Council chaired by Mr Mathias Ngobi with Mrs (now Lady Justice) Mary Maitum as vice chairperson, had had its term renewed. As we have seen, Mr Ngobi was one of Uganda's pioneer politicians and had served briefly as a Minister in the first Government of Milton Obote. After a serious disagreement over issues of principle, Obote threw him into jail together with four other Ministers. Idi Amin freed him after the 1971 coup. After that long ordeal in detention, he had picked up the pieces and settled down to a private life in his home village of Namutumba in Kamuli District in Busoga. President Museveni, in his capacity as Makerere's Chancellor had identified him to chair the university's Governing Council. It was a vibrant Council and it helped us to a good start. Although up till then I did not know much about him, we quickly established an excellent rapport, which made work easy for both of us. However, I heard that my predecessor had had some difficulties working with Ngobi. To the contrary, I had no difficulty working with Mathias Ngobi. I guess going to the same church made a difference.

As Vice Chancellor, I was not only supposed to be the chief administrative officer of the university, but also its chief academic officer. In fulfilling that role, the Vice Chancellor acts as chairman of the University Senate by law. Senate is the supreme academic organ of the university. Few of its decisions on academic matters are referred to the University Council for approval. Most of the Senate decisions, such as approval of examination results, admission of students, appointment of external examiners, staff development, the graduation ceremony, to mention a few, are final. It is also Senate's responsibility to recommend to the University Council new programmes, changes in the curriculum, new departments, institutes and faculties, dismissal of students found engaging in examination malpractices, as well as the university calendar. The Academic Registrar serves as the Senate's secretary. Senate is one of the most important of the Vice Chancellor's responsibilities. At the time I took over as Vice Chancellor, the Makerere University Senate was a huge body with a membership in excess of one hundred people. It was that big because, according to the 1970 Act, all Deans, Directors and Heads of Departments were members. Besides these, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the University Librarian, a representative of the Hall Wardens, two academic staff representatives and five representatives of the Minister responsible for Education were all members. There was also provision for the connected schools or institutions to have representation in Senate. Much as it was a big Senate, I knew the majority of the members by their first names. Apparently, little had changed in the three years I was away. Before age began to take its toll, I had the knack to remember people by their names.

Although there were myriads of burning issues, we chose not to rush into major administrative decisions. We decided to do first things first. One of the first things we had to do was to fathom the magnitude of the problems confronting the university, identify priorities and plan for appropriate interventions. Although many of the problems had been highlighted in the reports of the two Visitation Committees of Justice Manyindo in 1987 and of Gerald Sendaula in 1990, we wanted to have a personal experience. Therefore, besides reading the files and attending to routine administrative matters, we decided to visit all units of the university and discuss with members of staff the kind of problems they were facing and what needed to be done to solve them. These tours were a real eye opener. They provided us with a lot of information about the state of the university that could not have been adequately captured by reading reports and files alone.

In fact, what we discovered was startling and, in a very important way, provided us with a lot of food for thought as we began the administration of the university. For instance, we soon discovered that most departments had no working telephones and communication was either verbal or by letters and circulars. We also found out that a big part of the university's water borne sewage system had broken down, forcing people to use pit latrines and other unconventional ways of disposing solid waste. The situation was worst in most of the students' halls of residence. Pit latrines littered the university and were producing a terribly offensive smell all over the place. The latrines got full quickly, requiring constant emptying, but sometimes the university could not afford to pay for the service, so the filth would spill over.

We also discovered that most of the university buildings without flat roofs leaked profusely whenever it rained. In addition to this, the roads on campus were in a sorry state. As the two Visitation Committees had pointed out in their reports, the university's infrastructure had deteriorated to this extent due to neglect, as successive Governments, particularly during Idi Amin's rule, had chronically starved the university of funds. Chronic under-financing of the university meant that no serious maintenance could be undertaken and the university's physical plant was left to decay to an alarming state. The NRM Government had started providing some funds for capital development, but it was too little to make any impact.

After the Sendaula Visitation Committee, the Government of Uganda commissioned Mr Henry Sentoogo's Firm of Architects in 1991 to estimate how much it would cost to rehabilitate the university. Sentoongo had put the estimates at over 50 billion shillings which, at the time, the Ministry of Finance could not raise. To put it more concisely, Makerere's major problem was lack of money. The university was totally dependent on the Government Treasury for all its funding. Hence, one of our top priorities was to find a solution to the money problem. Our predecessors had done their best to improve upon the bad situation

but could not do much due to lack of money. The increasing student numbers, at the time all Government-sponsored, without a corresponding increase in the university budget did not help matters either. The extra numbers were putting more pressure on the already severely strained facilities – we shall return to this later. We did not confine our visits to meeting staff in their places of work, we also included tours of the students' halls of residence. On many occasions, I would drive with Professor Epelu Opio to a hall of residence for lunch after giving the Dean of Students and the Warden of the hall where we intended to have lunch very short notice. The idea was for us to find out at first-hand how the students were eating. Bad food was potentially a flash point. The first strike at Makerere in 1952 was over food, so we had to make sure students were eating reasonably well. We were aware of the monotonous diet of posho (maize meal) and beans. We wanted to make some improvements where we could. I was well aware that if we did not act fast on the menu, there was a real possibility that students would take me hostage and force me to eat weevil-riddled and badly cooked beans as it had happened to some of my predecessors. There was already talk in the halls of residence that the students were fed up with "rice in stones", which meant that the rice they were being served was of very poor quality with a lot of grit in it. These, as well as the inevitable routine activities, occupied us for the most part of our first year in office. In fact, most of our first year was spent on studying the university's problems and strategising on how best we could use the meagre financial resources to tackle them.

The other problem we had had to tackle much earlier on was transport for the Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor. As a sitting Vice Chancellor, Professor Kajubi used his personal vehicles for official work but I had never owned a personal vehicle in my life. The old Vice Chancellor's official Mercedes Benz, UXZ 007, bought during Professor Kirya's time, was in poor mechanical condition and it was the only available car. Professor Epelu Opio had to do with an old Land Rover he came with from the Teso Presidential Commission, which was later withdrawn from him. In 1994, we made our first visit to Makerere University Biological Field Station located in Kibale National Park near Fort Portal. To get there and back, we had to cram in Professor Epelu Opio's Land Rover on a round trip of over 400 kilometres. We had no other reliable vehicle that could safely do that journey. Worse still, there was hardly money for new vehicles and, for a while, I had to manage with the old and limping Mercedes Benz. I did not immediately move into the Vice Chancellor's Lodge at 1 The Edge, because the house had been rented out to the UNDP to accommodate a Nigerian expert who was teaching an MA Economic Policy and Planning course, and he needed time to move out. I was therefore, commuting from Kyambogo. When Professor Lutalo Bosa left for Kyambogo, he left behind a short chassis Land Cruiser, UPK 092, and on the advice of the University Transport Officer, I swapped it for the Benz, as it was in a better shape than the Benz.

Reverend David Sentongo, the University Secretary, was very concerned about my plight. I was equally concerned about driving around in old vehicles in bad mechanical condition. It constantly reminded me of an embarrassing incident I was once involved in at the Kampala-Entebbe Road junction traffic lights in 1991. As we have seen, at ITEK, there was no official car for the Principal. When I went to ITEK, the only vehicle I could use for my official work was an old white Land Rover Station Wagon, UE 056, purchased for NTC Kyambogo during Obote's second Government in the early 1980s. Makerere University had also received a similar one. Prior to the NRM takeover of 1986, Okello Lutwa's soldiers had commandeered it together with that of Makerere University. By sheer luck, it was recovered, but in a badly damaged state. The mechanics had somehow managed to repair it and put it back on the road. On that fateful day, I was on my way to Makerere for some official work. We had stopped for the red light at the Kampala Road-Entebbe Road junction. When the lights flashed green, the engine cut and could not start. My driver, Sam Kadama, was quite experienced and knew the rudiments of motor vehicle mechanics. He tried to fix the problem but in vain. Being an extremely busy junction, we had already caused a big traffic jam on both roads. Everywhere, everyone was hooting for us to get out of the way, the traffic police officers were also growing impatient with us. Because we were blocking the smooth flow of traffic at the junction, I had to get out and, with a few helping hands, we pushed the heavy Land Rover out of the way. It took us a while to fix the problem.

Now that my transport problem required urgent action, Reverend Sentongo remembered that before Professor Kajubi left office, the Secretary to the Treasury, Mr Tumusiime Mutebile, had hinted that he was looking into the possibility of buying a new official vehicle for the Vice Chancellor and that he had decided to bring my problem to his attention.

Fortunately, the Government had already placed an order for new off-road vehicles and one of them, a white Land Cruiser Station Wagon, was for the Vice Chancellor of Makerere University. I took delivery of the new Land Cruiser in March 1994 and kept it up to February 2004. Nevertheless, the problem was only partially solved; the Deputy Vice Chancellor had no car and for a while, we had to share the vehicle, which was not only inconvenient but also clumsy. We had to find money to buy him a vehicle, because, like the Vice Chancellor, he too was entitled to an official car. His vehicle arrived a few months later, and was used up till his retirement at the beginning of July 2004. This problem was not unique to senior university administrators, most faculties and departments had an aging fleet of vehicles acquired from donors or had none at all, including the departments where fieldwork was mandatory. The problem called for urgent attention.

## **Makerere Students – Managing the Unmanageable**

By 1993, the students' disturbances that had characterised much of the early 1990s were more or less over. There was now a new crop of student leaders. David Kazungu, son of Dr David Kazungu, an old Makerere member of staff in the Department of Agricultural Economics, was now the new Guild President. He was voted into office a few months before our arrival. In his quiet and soft-spoken way, this young man managed to restore order and sobriety to the Makerere student leadership. However, most of the wrongs that the Sendaula Visitation Committee had identified, such as indiscipline and use of vulgar language, continued unabated and Charles Rwomushana's case was still pending. Fortunately, the University Council had already made the decision about what to do with him before I arrived. All I had to do was to implement the Council's decision, which I did to the letter. We refused to release Rwomushana's final year results until he accounted for the money advanced to him for needy students. In fact, while the majority of students had long given up the struggle to have their various allowances restored, the so-called needy students were still a nuisance. I have labelled them "so-called" because there was a lot of confusion as to who was really a needy student. Many students were simply taking advantage of this confusion and the fact that there was no reliable way of determining who was needy. Some students saw the scheme as a source of free money. It was their association, MUNSA, which determined who was needy and who was not.

The frequent spate of fires in the students' halls of residence had also become a serious hazard. They were very frequent and, although there were no casualties, the fires destroyed a lot of property. The poor quality of food had forced the students to seek alternatives, like re-cooking the food from the hall cafeterias; and those who found the university food unpalatable resorted to cooking for themselves in their rooms, leading to disastrous consequences. Local electricians had found a way of mounting radiant coils on perforated steel frames, but the workmanship was primitive. The coils were dangerously bare and lacked a temperature regulator. For the students, these coils were cheap and did the job; so they became standard equipment for every student joining the university. Unfortunately, these electric coils were the cause of the frequent fires in the halls. Carelessness and power failure had made the coils extremely dangerous. Every now and then, students had something to cook or boil and, when power went off, some of them forgot to switch off their radiant coils. In some instances, they would inadvertently drop dry clothes on the coils. More often than not, when the power was restored and the students were out of the rooms, the coils would overheat and set the clothes and other nearby flammable materials ablaze. The fire would soon spread to the rest of the room and to other parts of the hall. This life-threatening situation called for a quick solution before it became a catastrophe with loss of lives.

The critical question we had to answer was how best to solve the problem. We decided that we should avoid any unnecessary confrontation with the students, as it was evident that they would not give up their coils, which had become part of their “rights” without a fight. So, any solution we devised to solve the problem had to take this fact into account. The solution had to be acceptable to the students, and also had to meet the urgent need to prevent future fires in the halls of residence. This was not going to be easy. We had taken indepth analysis of the problem of fires and radiant coils. The analysis showed that we had to solve two basic problems: the quality of food and table manners.

The rationale behind the cafeteria system introduced in the 1970s was to serve meals to as many students as possible in a relatively short time, unlike in the old system of fixed meal times. Besides, the student population was growing, therefore more flexible meal hours were necessary to serve all of them. The cafeteria also made it easy to use meal cards, which were necessary to weed out impostors (or “flukers” as the students called them). The system’s downside was that most students stopped using the dining halls altogether. Instead, they took their food to their rooms where they could re-cook it or “standardise” it to suit their taste, or to keep it and eat later. Some students chose to eat at all sorts of odd places, such as under the shades of the tree. Students provided their own cutlery and crockery. After the meals, they dumped the leftovers and washed their utensils in the washing basins, leading to constant blockage.

After analysing the problem, we agreed that the best approach was to involve the students’ leadership in solving the problem. We invited the Students’ Guild and Hall Chairpersons to a consultative meeting in the Council Room. After explaining the problem, we asked the students for their views. As we expected, the issues we had raised drew mixed reactions. While many regretted the several fire incidents that had occurred on the university campus in the recent past, they refused to admit that their crude radiant coils were responsible. Some blamed the fires on a few careless students; others blamed the University Administration for the old and faulty electrical system in most halls of residence and the poorly prepared meals. The meeting was a bit rowdy, so I had to remind the students that the matter we were discussing was of grave concern to the University Administration, and if we failed to address it, their own lives and those of their fellow students were at risk. I further explained that if hundreds of students died in an inferno, the Vice Chancellor would take all the blame and parents, the Government and the public would demand answers and explanations from him and not from the student leadership. In such a situation, the Vice Chancellor would have no option but to resign because he would have failed in his duty to protect the students. It was not a question of trading accusations or scoring debating points, it was a matter of life and death, period. It was therefore imperative that we solved the frequent fire problem in the halls of residence as quickly as possible.

After this passionate appeal, we agreed to find a lasting solution together. The ideas were many but it all came down to one option: the crudely manufactured radiant coils had to be replaced with professionally manufactured ones which did not overheat and had a reliable temperature regulator, used only in designated places. The Wardens had to monitor all rooms to ensure that students were not using the banned coils. The second solution was to improve on the quality of food and to train all cooks who did not have training in catering. We suggested to the students that, since every hall had a Mess Minister, the ministers should be more proactive and, together with the Hall Wardens and domestic bursars, should get involved in the inspection and vetting of food items the vendors supplied to their kitchens. They were at liberty to reject any food item which they believed was sub-standard. If they accepted sub-standard food, then they shouldn't blame the University Administration for it. In return, we promised to organise a training programme for the cooks and waiters. A few days later, I was surprised to read a lead story in one of the dailies with a banner headline "Ssebuwufu threatens to resign". Peter Mwesigwa, who at the time was a Mass Communication student and a student leader in Northcote Hall had filed the story. That is when I learnt that, at Makerere, walls have ears, and that one had to be careful with one's words.

A sizeable cross section of students, particularly the females found the decisions to ban the use of radiant coils for cooking in the rooms unpalatable. Some were so upset with the collective decision that they described me as a "low class Vice Chancellor". These remarks did not deter our commitment towards solving a potentially fatal problem. We were determined to stamp out the fire scourge from the halls of residence once and for all to avert a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. However, we had to ensure that the right type of heaters we had agreed on with the student leaders were readily available in the country at prices students could afford. For this, we enlisted the expertise of an experienced electrical engineer, Dr Moses Musaaazi, who was then the Head of the Department of Electrical Engineering in the Faculty of Technology. We requested him to shop around for what, in his technical assessment, were the most suitable heaters on the market that met our specifications. It did not take him long to find them. After a few demonstrations, we were ready to recommend them to the students. From then on, the Wardens were under instruction not to allow any student to use the old unsafe radiant coils. Wherever they found them, they were supposed to confiscate them from the offenders. They were also to identify suitable places in the halls of residence where students could cook. There would be no more cooking in the rooms. The Dean of Students had to ensure full compliance with the ban on the use of the unsafe coils. After some initial resistance, students responded positively and accepted the change. For a long time, there were no fires reported in the halls of residence. Obviously, our simple solution worked. We could have resorted to the usual conventional method of issuing orders banning the coils and cooking in the rooms. However,

we were certain students would simply ignore such orders. In all probability, that approach could have provoked an unnecessary riot. We were slowly, but surely, learning how to manage the unmanageable.

As we grappled with the fire problem in the halls, we decided to restore the long lost table manners. We had to convince students to eat their food from the dining halls. George Kihuguru who was still Dean of Students suggested that the best approach was to buy sufficient cutlery and crockery for all the dining halls. A splendid idea it was! We considered buying ordinary china, but it was too expensive and susceptible to loss, breakage, and even being used by riotous students as missiles against the security forces. Kihuguru came up with another brilliant idea, instead of china, we decided to buy multi-purpose stainless-steel trays, which had compartments for food, soup, dessert and cutlery. I do not recall how the students reacted when they first saw them, but they must have embraced the change without difficulty and must have liked the look of their trays. From then on, no student carried food to the room. They all ate in the dining halls. I must admit the square trays were a novelty. I later learnt that some students called them the, "Ssebuwufu Trays". However, we still had a few more problems to solve. The quality and quantity of food were still a problem. How do you provide quality mass-produced food? Soon, we found we had the answer. We invited experts in institutional catering and mobilised the university cooks and domestic bursars for refresher courses. When the cooks returned to the kitchen after the training, their cooking skills had tremendously improved, so much so that even the female students, known to shun the cafeteria ostensibly because the food was of poor quality, were now eating from the university cafeteria; as the food tasted better. The pig farmers who used to collect the leftovers were now going away empty-handed.

However, in addition to these efforts to improve the students' welfare, the budget for the students' ration remained a big constraint. For the Government-sponsored students, the budget allocation per student per day was only Sh1,070. This was supposed to cover the four meals every student was entitled to per day: breakfast, lunch, high tea and dinner. It was too little for us to provide four decent meals. We kept urging the Government to improve on the budget but to no avail. Unfortunately, these discussions coincided with the departure of George Kihuguru, the Dean of Students. It was a sad moment for me to see him go. I had learnt a lot about student management from him and, for a while, I was worried that we would fail to find a good replacement. Luckily, Uncle George had groomed a good crop of wardens who could succeed him. Out of all the applicants the Appointments' Board interviewed for the job, John Ekudu-Adoku emerged the best candidate for the job. He had accumulated a wealth of experience in student management. He had been the Warden of the students' hostel at Kabanyolo and had risen to the rank of Senior Warden in charge of University Hall. Being a good administrator, he was liked by students. Among the male students' halls of residence at Makerere,

University Hall and Livingstone Hall were the best maintained. Besides being a Hall Warden at Makerere, he was also a practising Pastor at the Baptist Church. His colleague, Cosmas Omara, also a Senior Warden in charge of Livingstone Hall, took up the post of Deputy Dean of Students. It was the first time the Appointments' Board substantively filled the position of Deputy Dean. George Kihuguru did not have a full-time deputy all the years he was Dean of Students. When Mr Ekudu assumed office, he took no time to settle in and, before long, he had become truly part of the management team. His first task was to look for further improvements in the students' welfare. The hot water system had long broken down in all halls of residence, so students had only cold showers where showers existed. With the little money that was generated internally, the hot water systems in most of the halls were fixed. Once again, the students could enjoy a hot shower or bath. Where the flush toilets had collapsed, Ekudu got them fixed too. Gradually, the filthy and stinking pit latrines that had become a prominent feature around every hall of residence started disappearing from the university's landscape.

Beef was a food item that had become difficult to keep because the cold rooms in the halls had also broken down. Once again, Ekudu was able to find money to repair most of them and soon halls could afford to buy perishable food in bulk to keep in the cold rooms until they were ready to be used. No doubt, we had reason to be excited about these developments. I think our biggest achievement, as far as students' welfare was concerned, was the improved menu. The university had its own bakery and maize mill. These started functioning during George Kihuguru's time. The two facilities supplied the students' kitchens with bread and maize meal. However, bread supply was intermittent because sometimes the bakery would run out of flour. John Ekudu made sure that bread supply to the dining halls was constant. This meant that students could have bread almost every day. The next step was to work on a new menu. He re-introduced the long-forgotten items such as eggs, milk, chicken, fish and matooke (boiled banana). He achieved all this by supplementing the Government ration budget with money from the privately-generated income, and by cutting out waste.

To ensure that students were fully in charge of what they ate, he formed a Menu Committee in each hall of residence. It was not yet time to rest on his laurels; he had another problem to solve. Most hall kitchens used firewood for cooking. This was no longer acceptable at a university that was supposed to lead the campaign for environmental protection by example. Secondly, firewood vendors were in the habit of cheating the university. They would deliver lorries full of what appeared to be real firewood but, in reality, much of it was figs and shrubs. John Ekudu quickly found a way around the problem. All kitchens switched to liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) which, although a little more expensive, was far cleaner and more efficient. By and large, we had delivered on most of the promises we made to the student leaders the first time we sat down with them early in 1994.

Although the dust had settled, student politics was still shaky. The Students' Guild had lost most of its credibility because of corruption and abuse of office by successive generations of student leaders. In the academic year 1994/95, Isa Bantalib Taligoola, a medical student, succeeded David Kazungu as Guild President. In contrast to his predecessor, Taligoola came across as an abrasive and aggressive character and, for a while, we were concerned that he would revive the confrontational students' politics of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The inaugural speech he delivered after he was sworn in was full of hints of things to come. His speech was a litany of the many problems afflicting students at the university. He kept repeating the pledges made during the campaign and stressed that he had come to make sure the University Administration paid serious attention to the students' grievances and fixed their problems. Naturally, the tough talking drew thunderous cheers from his attentive audience. He was the first Guild President I was swearing in and I could not help wondering whether he was the kind of student leader we could work with. I also remembered that in politics, usually the campaign rhetoric and the reality were miles apart, so we could only wait and see. I also re-discovered something I already knew. Student politics at Makerere was of a lot of interest to the national body politic. Political parties were sponsoring candidates of their choice and providing them with money and other logistics to run their campaigns. In addition, political party stalwarts canvassed for votes for the candidates of their choice all over the university campus, sometimes at odd hours in the night. If an aspiring candidate had no resources or sponsorship, it was hard to win a Guild presidential election. Interestingly, students had come to expect a lot of goodies from the candidates for their votes. In fact, students had coined the slogan, "no logistics, no vote". The "logistics" took several forms, but the most popular was a local liquor known as nguli and cigarettes. These were more or less standard campaign items. Campaign time was a time for pomp and showing off who was best facilitated in terms of fleets of vehicles accompanying him or her at every campaign rally. It was actually fun, if not an inconvenience to watch Guild presidential candidates campaign.

However, when all was said and done, the majority of students voted for the candidate they perceived to have articulated best the issues affecting their wellbeing at the university. Many well-facilitated candidates lost, because they failed to impress the voters at the rallies. It seemed oratory was a key factor in persuading voters. The elections tended to be free and fair. Although, as one would expect, some losing candidates would allege foul play and challenge the validity of the outcome; such incidents were rare and quickly resolved. It was the duty of the Electoral Commission, which was supposed to be an impartial and independent body, to ensure a free and fair election and sort out any irregularities. Only cases which the Commission considered too serious to warrant the intervention of the university administration would be referred to us to sort out; otherwise we always stayed clear from their electioneering campaigns and voting. We allowed them to

exercise their democratic rights without undue influence from us, and accepted and worked with whoever the students elected to be their leader.

Incidentally, this was not always the case. Some senior university administrators acting on the instructions of the national Government of the day have been known to influence the outcome of the Guild presidential elections. As the Sendaula Visitation Committee of 1990 observed, in 1984 the national Government of the day imposed a losing candidate on the students as Guild President. It so happened that the winning candidate that year belonged to the wrong political camp, the Democratic Party of Paulo Kawanga Semwogerere. That was anathema to the ruling Party. In the process, the election results were overturned in favour of the runner-up, and the winner had to flee the country for his safety before completing his degree. I was made to understand that he is now a citizen of Canada and writes regularly for the *New Vision* newspaper from Toronto. Although the students protested, they helplessly could not do anything about it; they had to accept the leader imposed on them. Inadvertently, this action made a mockery of the whole essence of students' democracy and dealt a severe blow to the integrity and reputation of the Students' Guild as an institution. Regrettably, from then on most students lost interest in the Guild elections. Many of them wondered whether it made sense to participate in what they saw as sham elections. In my view, the legacy of this act has continued to affect such elections to this day. There is now a lot of apathy and, on many occasions, voter turnout has been as low as 30 per cent of the eligible voters. The scandals of the recent years, in which Guild Presidents have been involved have not helped matters either. If anything, they have dampened the voters' interest further. During the campaigns, many aspiring Guild presidential candidates made too many promises, only to deliver next to nothing when voted into office. This too has contributed to the low morale and low voter turn-up at Guild elections.

I guess we had plenty of good luck. For all the time I was at Makerere as Vice Chancellor, we experienced neither any serious Guild electoral dispute that required settlement in the courts of law nor cancellation of the entire election results. In my opinion, we achieved such a feat because we allowed the process to take its natural course without interference. Even when some disgruntled students wanted us to take sides, we resisted. Instead, we advised them to stick to the Guild Constitution and, if they thought it had weaknesses or was flawed, seek to amend it as they saw fit. The amendment of the Guild Constitution took some time and several successive Guild governments before it was amended. In so doing, we were giving them practical training in the art of democracy as some would be the future leaders of our country. We wanted them to learn from first-hand experience and from their own mistakes how true democracy works and how to resolve political disputes in an amicable way. I think we succeeded, somehow. Secondly, we gave the Dean of Students and the Guild Legal Advisor a free hand to handle most of the election-related complaints in an impartial way.

Ekudu always did his best to maintain order during electioneering. However, there were a few instances when his impartiality in these matters was tested. What we actually witnessed and had to contend with were the numerous scandals, revolving around finances. Sadly, Isa Taligoola was involved in two of them. The first scandal was an international conference the Guild organised in 1995. Isa Taligoola, as Guild President, together with some of his Ministers mooted the idea of holding a big conference at Makerere, involving student participants from several universities around the world. They drew up a budget amounting to 56 million shillings and went about fundraising. They approached the Ministry of Education and Sports for assistance. The sympathetic Permanent Secretary pledged to meet part of their conference budget from the Ministry's coffers. Out of the 56 million shillings, 10 million was budgeted for meals. As soon as the Ministry of Education released the money, the 10 million was passed on directly to the Dean of Students who was responsible for the meals. The rest of the money remained in the hands of the Guild President and his various Ministers. At the end of the poorly attended conference, we started receiving claims for unpaid bills from people who had supplied goods and services for the conference on credit. We wondered why the Guild could not pay these bills when indeed they had the money! It only came to our attention later that some of the Ministers who received advances to pay for the various conference items had actually swindled the money. We requested accountability for all the money spent on the conference; none was forthcoming from the Guild. The money for which the accountability was readily available was food money over which the Dean of Students had direct control. When they failed to account for the money, we had no choice but to discipline the culprits. Although Taligoola was not directly involved in the fraud, we reprimanded him for seriously failing to control the excesses of his scheming Ministers.

Unfortunately, even after this embarrassing episode, Taligoola's regime had not run out of money-swindling schemes. In the same year, the Guild President and one of his Ministers received information that an international students' conference was due to take place in Portugal. I believe the theme of the conference had to do with environmental issues. At the time, we had made it a policy to encourage Guild leaders to have some international exposure. Therefore, when the Guild President approached me with a request for financial support amounting to some US\$7,000 to enable him and his Minister for International Affairs attend the Lisbon conference, I quickly asked the Dean of Students and the Bursar to look for the money. The Bursar gave them the air ticket and money for their upkeep. They left for Portugal through Nairobi because they needed a visa to enter Portugal and, in East Africa, the Embassy of Portugal was in Nairobi. A few days later, they were back. Isa Taligoola presented me with a written report on the conference and thanked me for facilitating their attendance at such an informative conference. He had compiled the report as part of the

accountability for the money advanced to them. As if to prove that he actually attended the conference, he told me that while at the conference, they had met several professors who were familiar with Makerere University and that they had sent me warm greetings. He even volunteered a few names. I had no reason to doubt his sincerity and the authenticity of his report. Perhaps I was too naïve, not to have recognised the sham. Instead, I had gone on to thank the young man for having been a good ambassador for Makerere at the conference and hoped he had found his first international exposure an exciting and rewarding experience.

The needy students were still a nuisance. Taligoola himself was one of them, but did not play a significant role in the association. At about the same time, a student going by the name of Opira had taken over as chairman of the Needy Students' Association (MUNSA) and was busy inciting students to disrupt lectures if we refused to release their money. We were determined to bring an end to what we saw as another way for a few students to continue receiving free money from Government. We told the MUNSA chairman that there would be no money for the so-called needy students until we had found a more accurate way of determining who was genuinely needy. Any student who needed money had to enrol in the needy work scheme, which most of them had rejected, citing that the kind of work they were being assigned to do was demeaning to a university student. Naturally, the MUNSA Chairman was not amused by our seemingly hard line stand. Apparently, he knew more about Taligoola's money making schemes than we did. As if to tell us that we had been hard on the genuinely needy students while giving away free money to the Guild President, perhaps in exchange for his loyalty, he was ready to spill the beans. He told his fellow students that the University Administration was denying them their rights, while turning a blind eye to the real swindlers. He alleged that we had given the Guild President money for a conference in Portugal which he never attended. The fact that he returned only after three days was enough evidence to prove that the President could not have attended the conference in Portugal. To my dismay, he was dead right; Taligoola had not gone to Portugal. However, before I could act on Opira's tip off, I needed more concrete evidence; so I invited Opira to my office. I wanted him to tell me his source of such damning information and whether what he was alleging was one of those ploys to de-campaign Isa Taligoola. He came to my office but refused to reveal the source of his information. Instead, he advised me to do my own homework which I thought was rude of him. However, we had come to know him as one of those crude characters in the university, so his rude remarks did not surprise me. I was about to dismiss the whole thing as petty jealousy, but the rumour persisted. Students had started talking of a "scandal of the year" and my colleagues were getting seriously concerned about the persistent rumour about the Guild President's financial impropriety.

Something had to be done to confirm or dispel the rumour. I decided to initiate an investigation. I was tempted to call Taligoola to clear the air. I soon realised that

this method would not give me the right answers. All he could do was to deny any of the allegations and possibly challenge anyone who had evidence against him to come forward; and it was unlikely any student, including Opira, would come forward. So, I decided to use a different approach. I wanted to confront him with evidence but I did not have any. I had to figure out a way of getting some. When Taligoola asked me to facilitate his attendance to the conference, he left me with a copy of the invitation letter from Portugal, signed by one of the conference organisers. We had kept the letter for record purposes. I decided to write to the author of the letter, asking him to confirm whether indeed Makerere University students had attended the conference. A few weeks later, a reply came back. The letter confirmed my worst fears. The MUNSA Chairman had been dead right! The brief reply from Portugal said that indeed an invitation letter had been sent to Makerere and Taligoola had acknowledged the invitation, confirming their attendance at the conference with a promise to send the conference registration fee in due course. That was the last time the conference organisers had heard from Makerere. Not a single student from Makerere had attended the conference. This was the smoking gun I had been looking for.

Armed with this letter, I decided to confront the Guild President. I invited him for a serious talk. First, I asked him whether he had heard about the rumour about his trip to Portugal. He said he had and that it was utterly false. He blamed the opponents he had defeated in the election, for waging a smear campaign against him in order to bring him and his government down. By precipitating a crisis, they hoped that a snap election would be called and they would win it, adding that he was not worried because all that they were alleging were not true. How could he have compiled a report for me if he had not attended the conference? The professors he met were his witnesses, and I was free to contact them if I so wished. He dismissed the allegation as malicious and sour grapes on the part of the opposition. I listened attentively in both amusement and anger. Here was a young man who sincerely believed he had outsmarted everybody, including the Vice Chancellor. In fact, he had succeeded in hoodwinking me. The young man was not repentant and showed no remorse for what he had done. Then, I decided to pull out the letter from my desk and asked him to read for himself. At that moment, he began to tremble and lose his composure. It was time for him to tell the truth. I asked him whether he ever corresponded with the author of the letter. He confirmed he had written to him, accepting the invitation to attend the conference. The rest was a confession and, for the first time, I felt like a Catholic priest in a confession box.

As I listened to the young man's confession, I was fervently taking notes, which I thought I would need later. After pulling himself together, he narrated how they had failed to secure visas for Portugal from the Portuguese Embassy in Nairobi; that they realised that it would take a long time and by the time they

were through with it, the conference would have almost ended. It was at that point they thought of cancelling the trip. After abandoning the trip, he knew he had to return the money to the University Bursar, but his Minister had other plans for the money. According to the Minister, “politics was about getting rich in the quickest way possible”, so it was no use coming back to Makerere and surrendering their dollars to the Bursar. Why should they leave office poor? He alleged that his Minister hatched a scheme, which involved forging the Portuguese immigration stamps and other stamps. The idea was to stamp their passports to make it look genuine, adding that in Nairobi you could get anything you wanted, as long as you had the money. They paid a fee to the forgers to stamp their passports with date of entry and exit from Lisbon. Although he was not quite sure, he believed that among the fake stamp makers, there were some Mozambicans and Angolans. With the passports properly stamped, they decided to share the money and return to Kampala. According to him, their early return must have raised suspicion. Students started asking questions whether they had really gone to Portugal in such a short time. I gathered from his version of events that he was blaming it all on his Minister just in order to present himself as an inactive accomplice. As it turned out, he had actually masterminded the whole scam. When I pressed him harder why he had written the fictitious report, his answer was that they decided to write the report when the students started talking. It was a ploy to pre-empt the rumours before they reached the University Administration. He had picked the names of the professors from conference brochures. He had now realised he should not have given in to his Minister’s absurd scheme, which had put him into trouble. As usual, he started pleading for mercy and forgiveness, adding that he was misled by his Minister and that they had used up all the money; so they had nothing to refund. I listened attentively to his long confession with disbelief. At the same time, I could not help feeling sorry for him. Either he was a weakling who couldn’t handle subordinates, or he was telling a white lie to save his skin. The thought that perhaps the university was grooming corrupt leaders for the future frightened me. I was left with no choice, but to take the case to the Central Executive, which in turn recommended that the case be referred to the University Disciplinary Committee. The two appeared before the Disciplinary Committee. At the end of the hearings, the verdict was unanimous. Both students were dismissed and asked to refund the money they had embezzled. When Isa Taigoola failed to refund the money, the case was referred to the Court of Law. The case dragged on for a long time. Eventually it was dismissed on technical grounds. Students had to elect a new Guild President. The young man tried to come back and resume his medical studies. However, as far as the university was concerned, he had a case to answer.

Before the students elected a new Guild President in place of Isa Taligoola, the University Council decided to implement the 50,000 shilling (the equivalent of US\$25) user fee per student per year. The fee was payable by both Government-

sponsored and private students. The decision to impose this fee had been taken long before I came into office but, for some reasons, it was not implemented. One of the reasons for delaying its implementation was that the students had resisted it. We took time explaining why it had become necessary for every student to contribute to the cost of running the university. Even the Ministry of Education and Sports was in agreement with the university on this issue, as the university's annual budgetary allocation from the Government Treasury was inadequate for it to continue providing decent services. The bulk of the user fee was for improving students' welfare and some critical university functions like the library and students' health services. Even with these explanations, the students were still not prepared to listen. As the Sendaula Visitation Committee of 1990 put it, Makerere students were generally insensitive to and unappreciative of the economic problems facing the country; so, they always interpreted any austerity measures taken by Government in the national interest as punishment to them as a group. We were therefore well aware of what the consequences would be when we started implementing the user fee. To minimise the anticipated chaos, we decided to adopt a phased approach. The user fee would start with the new students in 1995/96. All continuing students were exempted from paying it. The approach seemed to have worked well. We had not foreseen the user fee becoming a serious campaign issue during the forthcoming Guild presidential election. We were wrong. If anything, it was the issue. Most aspiring candidates vowed to fight tooth and nail to have it scrapped once elected. It became a campaign slogan which drew big applauses from the students at every rally. Galogitho, also a medical student, emerged the winner. He was a small man with a big voice and a convincing tongue.

As soon as the new Guild President was sworn in, he started sending out messages over some of the FM radio stations, instructing the new students not to pay the user fee. In an attempt to diffuse a potentially explosive situation, we held several meetings with him and some of his Ministers to try to convince them that the user fee was for their own good. It did not work. The young man was determined to deliver on his election promise and nothing would stop him. Some parents were angered and wondered who had given the young man authority to issue instructions to their children who were preparing to join the university in the next few weeks. When the new academic year started, most of the new students willingly paid the user fee. However, a few held back in the hope that, in time, the fee would be scrapped. The new Guild President had not given up the fight. As soon as the new students settled in, Galogitho started planning his next move. This time, it would be real action in the form of a strike. Either the University Administration withdrew the user fee or the students would boycott lectures. We did not go back on our decision. He too did not back off. In the end, he pulled out his last card. He called for a strike and as usual, his fellow students joined him. At some point, the Police had to be called in to control the rowdy students. During

the night, some students assembled in front of the then Northcote Hall, lit bon fires and started shouting all sorts of obscenities. The Guild President was with them, and the Police quickly moved in, rounded up some students and locked them up in the cells at Wandegeya. That marked the end of the strike which turned out to be a one-day affair. The matter went to the University Disciplinary Committee and after due deliberations, the Committee reached the conclusion that the strike was uncalled for since the students had been party to the Council's decision to introduce the user fee in the first place. Secondly, the majority of the new students had willingly paid the fee. The Committee recommended that the Guild President be discontinued from the university for leading an illegal and disruptive strike. Once again, the University Council unanimously upheld the Committee's decision. Galogitho, with several of his Ministers, including the Guild Vice President were dismissed. The University Council took this drastic action to curb the excessive indiscipline amongst Makerere University students that was threatening to spin out of control.

The students who were held in the Police cells were carefully screened and those who had played minor roles in the strike were exonerated and allowed to continue with their studies. However, the ones who had engaged in excesses were also dismissed from the university. As we expected, some of the students appealed to the Chancellor of the University. The Chancellor listened sympathetically to their plight and promised to take up their problem with his Minister of Education and Sports and the university authorities, which he did. Unfortunately, for the dismissed students, the university community had little sympathy for them. The university staff and the public at large were fed up to the brim with the rampart indiscipline and hooliganism which had escalated and caused severe damage to public, staff and university property, as well as cases of assault whenever students went on rampage. Most people at the university had concluded that the University Administration had become inept in dealing with misbehaving students. Our action to expel the Guild President, his Vice and a host of other students was hailed as a bold move in the right direction. I recall a colleague of mine in the Department of Chemistry coming to me soon after we had expelled the students to thank me for the bold action. He said that, before we took this action, people were wondering whether the Vice Chancellor was still in control of the university! Therefore, when some members of staff overheard that the Chancellor was asking us to reconsider our decision, they urged us to stand firm. They argued that going back on our decision would send the wrong signal to the students. They had seen this happen before and the consequences were there for all to see. Fortunately, neither the Chancellor nor his Minister exerted pressure on us to re-admit the students. Above all, the user fee remained in force until 2001 when the President in his election manifesto pledged to meet all the costs of Government-sponsored students at universities and other tertiary institutions.

By this action, we were now on the way to transform the way students behaved, hopefully, for the better. In fact, we learnt later that most students could not believe that the university administration could expel student leaders from the university. They hoped the Chancellor would reverse the University Council's decision and get the expelled students reinstated.; that what happened was just a temporary glitch. However, this time, the university stood firm by its decision. The decision was not a temporary glitch as some affected students thought; it was for real. Galogitho was the second Guild President to be sent down in a row. When a new Minister of Education and Sports, Professor Apollo Nsibambi was appointed, some of the expelled students resurrected the case. This compelled the Chancellor to write to the new Minister, urging him to prevail upon Makerere University authorities to re-admit the expelled students. The new Minister had been a senior member of the university community and had been at Makerere for over 30 years, so he had witnessed the lawlessness and excesses of the students.

Before, whenever the University Administration tried to discipline the misbehaving students, the higher authorities would thwart their effort. This had given the students the impression that they were untouchable; therefore, they could misbehave with impunity and get away with it. The new Minister convinced the Chancellor that it was not right to ask the university to revoke its decision. According to the Minister, such an action would undermine the authority of the University Administration and would fuel more indiscipline and acts of hooliganism among students. He however promised the Chancellor that he would seek admission for the students expelled from Makerere in other universities. The Chancellor accepted his Minister's advice and the university was spared the agony of going back on its decision.

Over the years, Northcote Hall had earned a reputation for being the most notorious and undisciplined male hall of residence on the university campus. The students there were "militarised" in the real sense of the word. During the orientation week, all new students resident in Northcote had to be inducted into the Hall's rituals and culture. Other halls had such cultural rituals too, but Northcote's surpassed them all. The Northcote Hall Chairman was known as His Imperial Majesty (HIM). Hall Ministers and some residents had military ranks and wore pips on their military fatigues like real soldiers. In appreciation of his services to the students, the hall's military high command had given George Kihuguru a rank as a commissioned officer in the Northcote army; but when he started clamping down on some of their excesses, the high command demoted him. In fact, the students referred to their hall as the Northcote State, and Uganda as the neighbouring state. Besides these practical jokes, Northcoters had no sense of decency whatsoever. They would not hesitate to use foul language on any passer-by, particularly females. As a result, the public was always wondering whether Northcote residents were real university students or a bunch of hooligans hand-

picked from one of Kampala's slums and dumped in this hall of residence. In short, Northcote Hall students had become a nuisance, not only to the university community, but also to the public at large.

Worst still, many objectionable things were going on in Northcote Hall. For example, there was the daily and loud singing of the Hall's anthem "Bachelor Boy"; the daily drumming, sometimes with the assistance of young children called "the bastards" from the neighbourhood; and the incessant disruption of football matches during the inter-hall competitions that forced the Uganda Association of Referees to stop sending referees to Makerere to officiate at football matches. Northcote had a slogan, "Either we win or they lose", which explains why whenever they sensed that their team was facing imminent defeat, they would stop the match in all sorts of violent ways. There was also the constant trading of insults with the residents of neighbouring Nkrumah Hall, which the Northcoters referred to as the colony of Kabinda. They borrowed the term from Angola when it had problems with its province of Kabinda in the 1970s (Kabinda attempted to secede from the rest of Angola because of its oil). Furthermore, there was always "stone throwing" between the Northcoters and Lumumba Hall students whenever the Northcoters walked on what students of Lumumba Hall call their red carpet, on their way to or from the sports grounds. Lumumba's so-called red carpet is a walkway between the main entrance to the hall and Mary Stuart Road, paved with red bricks. Then, there was resentment the Northcote boys had for Livingstone Hall, because the girls in the nearby Africa Hall had decided to align with the Livingstone boys instead of them and had formed the Afrystone solidarity. Nevertheless, in the name and spirit of freedom of belonging to the university, the University Administration chose to tolerate these acts of indecency for some time. Besides, any attempt to get rid of their so-called Northcote culture, proudly referred to by them as the Northcote Spirit, was ferociously resisted not only by the incumbent students, but also by the former residents, appropriately called the Ancestors. The source of their military uniforms, which were passed from one generation of student leaders to another, was a well-guarded secret; and among their many obnoxious practical nuances was the habit of spreading finely ground spicy pepper on the dance floor during one of the balls the halls used to hold.

Although the University Administration took much of the blame for their failure to curb the excesses in Northcote Hall and in a few other halls of residence for a long time, some of these acts were seen as good humour until they began to take on a more sinister character. Obviously, some Northcote Hall students had started taking their peculiar mannerisms too far. For example, in one of those worrisome incidents, some students carried fresh human excreta and spread it all over the main entrance of Livingstone Hall. The story was too bizarre to be true. Even in our wildest imagination, we could not believe that a sane university

student could indulge in such an abominable act. Whoever had done it must have been a sick student. As usual, when we tried to investigate to find out who had done it, we were met with dead silence. No student was willing to come forward and give us useful leads beyond pointing an accusing finger at Northcote Hall. Like the Mafioso, apparently the students had perfected the omerta, the art of remaining silent even when one is under extreme pressure to divulge information. This time, we were determined to catch the culprits, but we failed miserably.

Sensing that the administration had failed to discover who had done it, Northcote's HIM became more confident and daring. In 1997, Livingstone Hall and Africa Hall organised a joint farewell dinner for their final year students. A number of prominent past Afrostonians were invited, namely Emmanuel Cardinal Wamala, the Archbishop of Kampala Archdiocese, Brigadier Jim Muhweezi, and Captain Francis Babu as Guests of Honour. Traditionally, a hall celebrating an important occasion would hire a brass band and staged a parade around the main university campus. As Livingstone and Africa Hall were preparing for their day, the Northcoters were also busy hatching a deadly plot that would have led to several deaths. Instead of the usual hot red pepper, this time they wanted to use something more potent. Northcote wanted to teach Livingstone and Africa Hall residents a lesson that would not be easily forgotten. As the Afrostonians went about marching, the Northcote students led by their chairman organised a counter-march to the kitchen of Livingstone Hall, where the food for the dinner was being cooked. After successfully scaring away the cooks, they took over the kitchen and began implementing their deadly plot. They had come with finely ground glass and lots of red pepper which they emptied into the food and sauce. By sheer luck, some of the cooks who had taken cover nearby saw what they were doing. After the mob had left the kitchen, the cooks checked and found pieces of ground glass in the food and sauce. The Africa Hall Warden was immediately informed, and he took the matter up with the University Administration without delay. Because we did not know what else they had done to the food, we advised the cooks to throw away everything they were cooking – food, meat and sauce, leaving some as evidence as we continued with the investigations. This drastic and costly action was taken to avert a bigger catastrophe.

This heartless act, averted in the nick of time because some of the cooks were vigilant, was a rude reminder to us as to how close we had been to a disaster of unimaginable proportions. The time had come to put an end to these barbaric and potentially dangerous acts. This time, Northcote Hall had overstepped the lines and had to pay the price. There would be no more kid-glove treatment of offenders. It would also mean the end of Northcote and its culture. All culprits had to face the wrath of the University Administration. Fortunately, this time, our investigations yielded a lot of useful information. It seemed that most students in Northcote had realised they had gone too far this time around. For the first

time, they revealed the name of their HIM. Although within the hall, it was known that the chairman doubled as HIM, outsiders, including the university administration, were not supposed to know. HIM was a faceless leader of the Northcote military high command and students kept the name of their HIM as a highly guarded secret. By so doing, they incredibly succeeded in keeping everybody guessing. But this time, they were ready to give the secret away for fear of what would happen to them. The majority of the residents were not ready to suffer collective punishment.

As we probed deep into this criminal act, we discovered that HIM was personally responsible for engineering the sinister plot. We also learnt who had ground the glass and purchased the pepper, got the names of the students who smeared the Livingstone gate with human faeces, and found out where the military uniforms and weapons were kept – in the ceiling of the top floor and other places in the hall that were well hidden from the eye. Some of the objects confiscated in the cache, such as daggers, well-sharpened pangas and a lot more were extremely dangerous weapons. To our surprise, a student gave us a tip-off that even the residents of Lumumba Hall had started acquiring military uniforms and weapons, perhaps to fend off the Northcoters' constant provocations. Those too were confiscated. We also searched all halls of residence to ensure that no other hall had such dangerous objects. Fortunately, besides Northcote, only Lumumba Hall had them. Through the many tip-offs received, we were able to identify all the students who had participated in the sinister plot in the Livingstone Hall kitchen and those who had committed other serious atrocities like spreading pepper on the floor during a ball. We compiled the evidence, prepared a charge sheet and presented it to the university's Disciplinary Committee for action. The Committee, chaired by a Judge of the High Court of Uganda who was also a member of the University Council, tried the Hall Chairman and all the students who had participated in the plot to poison the residents of Livingstone Hall and Africa Hall. The Committee found them guilty as charged and recommended their dismissal from the university. When the University Council convened in a special session, nearly every member was boiling with anger at what had happened. They could hardly believe that university students could turn themselves into potential mass killers. The Disciplinary Committee's recommendations were unanimously upheld. Over ten students were dismissed for their involvement in the acts. The Police also showed some interest in the case.

Most Council members thought that the Disciplinary Committee's recommendations did not go far enough. Dismissing some students without doing something about the overall discipline in the hall was only half the solution. We had to rid the hall of all acts of indiscipline and hooliganism in a way that would serve as a warning to students in other halls. One radical solution proposed and accepted was to close down the Northcote Hall for a year. The second was to

change the name of the hall. Most people believed that the name Northcote was closely associated with some kind of evil and wrong-doing, that there were a lot of negative things in the name Northcote, such as indiscipline and hooliganism. The hall needed to have a new name. The public would be asked to suggest a new name, based on the University Council's guidelines. The Council decided that we send all the Northcoters out, close the hall and then re-name it; and we had to implement the Council decisions immediately. It was not easy kicking all students out of the hall, but we did and surprisingly the mass protest we had anticipated did not materialise. It seems few students had sympathy for the Northcoters. While we waited for a new name to emerge, Northcote Hall became Hall X. Council's third resolution was the abolition of a system of permanent residence in one hall. The practice had been that once a student was assigned to a hall of residence, he or she remained there for the entire duration of the course. Council was convinced that this system had contributed in some way to the wave of indiscipline at the university. The new system required a student to re-apply for residence every new academic year. No student was to stay in one hall for more than two consecutive academic years. Again, we expected the students to put up some stiff resistance to what appeared to be very radical and unprecedented Council decisions, but none did. Just a few students on the professional courses like Medicine and Engineering complained because, by tradition, they were always residents. They could only become non-residents by choice. Nevertheless, Council thought this was a weak argument; many prominent doctors and engineers studied at Makerere but never stayed in the university's halls of residence throughout their years of study. There were also many non-resident private students pursuing the same courses staying outside the university campus. Therefore, staying in a hall of residence was a privilege and not a right. Without much ado, all Northcote students vacated their beloved hall and started looking for accommodation in the neighbourhood of the university. We later learnt that most of them had a tough time finding accommodation, as property owners were not eager to house former Northcote students, for fear that the same students would import the Northcote culture into their premises. We put Hall X under lock and key and deployed the university's security guards to keep watch over it day and night. This was a bold move which marked the beginning of the restoration of some discipline at the university.

As the University Council had instructed us to do, we placed an advertisement in the local newspapers, calling on the public to propose a suitable new name for Hall X. In 1950 when it was inaugurated, the hall had been named after Sir Geoffrey Northcote, who was the Chairman of Makerere College Council from 1945 to 1948 and who died rather abruptly, while on holiday in Britain. Time had come to give a new name to Sir Geoffrey Northcote Hall. Until then, there were only two, out of eleven or so halls of residence, which had African names: namely Lumumba for the boys and Africa for the girls. The rest bore colonial names. After a year, Hall X opened with a new crop of students. Soon after

reopening, the university – through a thorough screening exercise – chose a suitable name, picked out of the many names we had solicited from the public. To my amusement and amazement, my name was among those suggested. Fortunately for me, Council had long decided that such an honour should only go to the deceased. I was spared the embarrassment. Council chose the name Nsibirwa, because it received the highest number of votes. The justification for the choice of Nsibirwa was the fact that Martin Luther Munyagwa Nsibirwa, as Katikkiro of Buganda in the 1930s, signed the agreement transferring the land on Makerere and Mulago hills to the Protectorate Government to expand the young college and for the Medical School and Teaching Hospital at Mulago. He did so amidst serious protests and this act is cited as one of the reasons he was assassinated on the steps of Namirembe Cathedral in 1945. We all agreed that he merited the honour. Northcote became Nsibirwa Hall. Many applauded our decision; others lamented the demise of the name Northcote, as it held a lot of memory for them. Some wondered whether it was proper for Makerere University to honour a controversial figure like Nsibirwa. The answer was simple: universities are about controversial issues – the University was extending the honour to him in recognition of his timely contribution. As we have seen, if the Buganda Kingdom Government had not made more land available for its expansion, the British Government had threatened to transfer the college to Kitale, Kenya. The name change seemed to have worked the trick. Nsibirwa Hall had become exemplary as a disciplined hall up to the time I retired.

The Guild presidential elections which followed that turbulent period were more peaceful and the new Guild Presidents stopped being inflammatory. They also promised to cooperate with the university administration to improve the tarnished image of the Guild and Makerere students as a whole. Discipline continued to improve. In fact, there were occasions when the university was too quiet for our liking. Sarah Kagingo was the next Guild President to have run into trouble. She assumed office in 1998 and was one of the very few females to be elected as Guild President. She did not perform badly, but her opponents and detractors were busy at work, trying hard to undermine her. Through what appeared to be deliberate mis-information, some students had convinced her that the Dean of Students, John Adoku Ekudu, hated her and that he was party to the schemes her opponents were devising to topple her and her Government. I guess out of anger and frustration she burst out, making allegations to the press against Mr Ekudu. Among other things, she accused him of siding with her enemies to undermine her and for engaging in what she described as unethical activities. When she was put to task to substantiate the allegations against the Dean, she could not provide any proof. So, the Disciplinary Committee decided to suspend her for the rest of the semester. We thought that, as the second female to assume the office of Guild President in the history of Makerere, she would escape the problems that had bedevilled her predecessors; but unfortunately, she too succumbed to the old vices.

The most successful and scandal-free presidency was that of Lopez Mukuye, a Dental Surgery student. Mukuye became Guild President following the elections of 1999. Like David Kazungu before him, he brought back to the Students' Guild the long-lost dignity. Among his achievements was the revival of *The Makererian*, a students' newspaper which had ceased publication decades ago. Denis Okema, who succeeded Mukuye, was equally decent. He kept *The Makererian* going, after Lopez Mukuye had left office. A group of former Mass Communication students ran the newspaper as a private venture. The other trouble free presidency was that of Mukasa Mbidde who, although a confessed member of the Uganda's Young Democrats (UYD) – the youth wing of the Democratic Party – performed his job as Guild President with minimum hassle. Occasionally, there was the usual bickering around financial management within the Guild Representative Council (GRC) and the Students' Parliament. Some GRC members were in the habit of throwing up unsubstantiated accusation of financial impropriety against some Guild Ministers.

In spite of these occasional skirmishes, some order had returned to students' politics, until February 2001 when the calm was rudely interrupted by the murder of a first-year student and a resident of Lumumba Hall. On Friday, February 02, 2001, Alex Remo Adegga, a first-year BA Education student who hailed from Arua District, was shot dead by a gunman in front of Mary Stuart Hall as he returned from a night out in town. The shooting took place a few minutes to six o'clock in the morning. When the news of his death broke out, all hell broke loose. Asuman Basalirwa, a Law student was then the Guild President. Curiously, Alex Adegga was shot dead a day after one of the national presidential candidates who was opposing President Museveni in the 2001 general elections had addressed a campaign rally at the university's Freedom Square. The rally had attracted several people from town. After the rally, the Square had been left in a mess with litter everywhere. We strongly suspected that the murderers took advantage of the rally to sneak into the university campus to commit the grisly act. I heard the shots from the window of my residence; it seemed to have come from within the university campus, about which I was obviously concerned. However, on second thoughts, I felt it was the Police chasing some criminals. The possibility of a student being shot dead within the confines of the university premises did not cross my mind at that time.

Whenever there was commotion at odd hours in any hall, particularly Mary Stuart and Lumumba which were close to the Vice Chancellor's Lodge, I would immediately contact the Dean of Students, Mr John Ekudu. The purpose was to fill me in if he already knew what was going on or to alert him if he did not know what was going on. After the gun shots, Lumumba and Mary Stuart residents started shouting, but the shooting subsided as soon as it had begun. It subsided because the students were already on the march to mobilise other students to

join them in a demonstration. I sensed that something had gone terribly wrong. Whatever it was, we had to be prepared for the worst. I rang John Ekudu, who had not received news about the commotion, but had started hearing students shouting from a distance. He promised to get in touch with the Warden of Mary Stuart Hall. I also tried to contact her, but her line was busy every time I called. A few moments later, Ekudu called me back. It was the news I was least prepared for. A student had been shot dead and the gunmen had taken a few female students with them, possibly to rape and murder them too. John Ekudu assured me, as he always did, that he was handling the situation as best as he could and that he would let me know when it was appropriate for me to visit the scene of crime. That was the beginning of our mayhem that day. I immediately contacted the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Epelu Opio, who was in charge of security, as well as the other members of the management team. We started working on some contingency plans to contain the situation as best as we could, while the Police investigated the circumstances under which the student was shot. This was the time I really appreciated the importance of the cellular phones, which enabled us to keep in touch constantly and to update one another on what was happening. What made this unfortunate incident worse was the fact that the country was in the midst of the presidential campaigns and everyone, including the students were politically charged. Most students at the university were opposition supporters. My big concern was the politicisation of this unfortunate incident. Before long, the students were at the Deputy Vice Chancellor's residence, demanding some explanation as to why the university had failed to protect their fallen comrade; why the university was so lax about security, and why the university had kept old and inept security guards whose only weapons were bows and arrows and batons? Fortunately, by the time the chanting students arrived at his residence, Professor Opio had left for the office. Nevertheless, they forced their way into his residence and started ransacking it. They assaulted his housekeeper, who later fled for his dear life. They also took away a bicycle, among other things. According to the eyewitness account we later received, the Guild President was leading his fellow students, which was quite understandable. As a leader, the students expected him to be with them at such a moment of bereavement. In all probability, if Professor Epelu Opio had been at home, the emotionally charged students would have killed him or inflicted serious injuries on him. He had to hide for some time until he was able to smuggle himself out of the university campus incognito. He had to stay away from the university campus for some time until the situation cooled down. The only communication link we had with him was by telephone.

From the Deputy Vice Chancellor's residence, students moved to all corners of the campus. A group of them proceeded to a place called Mailo Two on Bombo Road and grabbed an empty coffin. Then they marched with it all the way to the city centre, carrying what they called Alex Adegas's body and damaging public property in their wake. Shops in Wandegeya found open fell victim to the

looting of the students. They beat up some medical students they found attending lectures at Mulago, as well as students found reading in the Main Library. They injured some of them and forced them to join in the mourning demonstrations. By mid-morning, we had witnessed pandemonium on an unprecedented scale. The rowdy students smashed windows and doors in the Main Library and other buildings on the university campus. They damaged university and staff vehicles and disrupted all lectures. The Guild President seemed to have lost control of the situation, making it easy for the more radical students to take over.

The demonstration spread all over the campus and the neighbourhood. At Kasubi Trading Centre, traders quickly left their merchandise on the stands and ran for cover as the unruly mobs approached. The students ate all there was to eat and set the traders' stands ablaze. It was a sad day, not only for the university, but also for the poor people in the neighbourhood who were trying to eke a living out of their petty trade. They lost everything. For a long time, we had been warning successive generations of student leaders about the possibility of ill-intentioned impostors infiltrating through their ranks during demonstrations, and the danger such infiltrations posed, but many of them ignored our warning. This time around, the consequence fell on us. I believe that as most students began to demonstrate, which was perfectly understandable, they did not realise the extent to which their otherwise innocent demonstrations would be infiltrated by criminals and Kampala's vagabonds. The information that reached us in the aftermath of the demonstration indicated that most of the excesses committed during the demonstrations, like looting, were attributed to people outside the university campus who had posed as students. This is not to say that all the students were innocent of some of these unforgiveable criminal acts. Some students had behaved worse than the bayaye. So, the involvement of vagabonds and criminals in their demonstration did not absolve them from the guilt of crimes committed against the public that had nothing to do with what had happened at the university. When the situation seemed to be slipping out of control, the Police were forced to intervene. The Military Police joined them later. Makerere students feared the Military Police, the so-called "Valentine Boys", the most. The Police rounded up a few students for breach of public peace and for causing malicious damage to public property, but later released them.

Although the stampede was a one-day affair, it was a trying time for the university community and for me personally. I had intended to visit the scene of crime early in the day, but the Police advised me not to venture outside my residence until the situation had been brought under control. I kept monitoring whatever was going on outside on phone. Throughout the day, no student had attempted to enter my residence. As dusk approached and the situation appeared to be returning to normal, a small clique of students was part of the mob chased out of Kasubi Trading Centre on the west of the university. This small group,

led by a notorious BA student in the Faculty of Arts, seized John Ekudu and forced him to address them in the Freedom Square. The Police were now on their way out of the university campus. As Mr Ekudu started to address them, they demanded to know where the Vice Chancellor was. Mr Ekudu had no choice than to call me. After talking to me, he left his phone on so I could hear what the students were plotting to do. Some were unsure where the Vice Chancellor's residence was. Those who knew where my residence was led the mob. At about the same time, the Guild President had joined them. As they approached my residence, I decided to come out and talk to them in the courtyard. They did not like it; they wanted me to address them in the Freedom Square. I was reluctant to go to the Freedom Square, but the Guild President Basalirwa, persuaded me to go as a way of cooling the tempers. As we walked past the main gate to the Lodge, I saw a female from behind throw a stone at me, but it missed. Some of the students called me a Museveni supporter and that Museveni and I had murdered Alex Atega. Sensing that they could harm me, my body guard, Jesse Bwayo, secretly called the Police to come to our rescue. He too followed us to the Freedom Square.

Meanwhile, as we walked with the students to the Freedom Square, some of the students remained behind at my residence. They forced their way into the kitchen and ate whatever they could lay their hands on there and in the fridge. Others went behind the house and mercilessly uprooted and ate all the sugar cane my wife had planted there for the children. My nephews, Frank Ssebuwufu and Sam Mutesasira who were living with me at the time, struggled with the mob, stopping them from inflicting more damage to our property, but with very little success. The mob smashed the windscreen of a Fuso track belonging to a family friend, Sekimpi of Kiti (now deceased) and the Vice Chancellor's old Mercedes Benz, UXZ 007, which at the time had been grounded in the garage. They also overturned my small pick-up truck, located outside in the courtyard. The Police arrived quickly and dispersed the crowd that was ransacking my residence. My two sons, Michael (22) and Martin (20) decided to follow me to the Freedom Square. Later, the two young men told me that if the students attempted to harm me, they were prepared to die protecting me. I admired their courage. The students had erected a platform at the north end of the Square and had placed the coffin they had looted earlier in the day at the foot of the platform. I climbed it together with the Dean of Students. After the usual testing, Makerere oye! they asked me to address them. I had hardly begun to talk when the Police, clad in anti-riot gear, approached the Freedom Square and asked the students to disperse at once. Most of the students took off, but a few remained with me. I told the Police that I, together with my Dean of Students, was trying to calm the students but the Police insisted that we abandoned the assembly. Some of the students who were running away from the Freedom Square started hauling stones at the Policemen. This prompted the Police to fire rubber bullets and one hit my son

Michael on the his back. I believe the scar on his back will always be a reminder of his heroic attempt to save his father's life. Mr Ekudu learnt that the student who was leading that mob had a far more sinister plan for him and me. They had arranged to keep us talking until dark; then at some appropriate moment in the night, they would pounce on us and kill both of us, put my body in the coffin and leave it the Freedom Square. The Police had arrived just in time and saved our lives. I was further told that, at first, the Police were not aware of what the students' intentions of taking me to the Freedom Square were until a female Law student told the Police Commander that the mob intended to kill me and Mr Ekudu. It turned out later that the student who was leading that small but vocal group was mentally deranged. In fact, he eventually abandoned his degree course.

I had never been through such a terrifying experience with students before. In spite of a few who thought we were too hard on them, my relationship with most students was cordial and jovial. I always went out of my way to interact and share small jokes with them at the Main Building entrance, either as they waited to enter the lecture hall, or as they came out of the lecture hall. Besides, I was in constant contact with their leaders. A student leader was always free to enter my office. This incident changed my attitude altogether, as I began to see them as potential killers. I fully understood their anger and concern; however, what I believe the students failed to appreciate was the simple fact that the University Administration had not invited the gunmen into the university and therefore, had no hand in the murder of their fellow student. We were as concerned about what had happened as much as they were. Besides, for a long time, we had been pleading with the Ministry of Finance to provide us with funds to repair the perimeter fence that had been vandalised over the years of neglect. Some parts of it had also fallen into disrepair due to age. In fact, when the Chancellor visited the university a few years earlier to fundraise for the renovation of Lumumba and Mary Stuart Halls, he had pledged to find money for the fence repairs. However, for reasons of scarcity of resources, the Treasury had not released the money. What perturbed us even more were the political overtures the students were attaching to the killing of Alex Atega. Some people were making political capital out of a terrible tragedy that had befallen the university. Also, the students were well aware of the university's rule that required them to be indoors by midnight. Students, who came back to their halls of residence well after midnight were doing so in breach of this regulation. However, on a positive note, the two females who had been kidnapped by the thugs had come back. Those who had the chance to talk to them said that the girls were a bit guarded when narrating their ordeal. I remember receiving information that after the gunmen had raped them; they dumped them on the university's main sports field below Mary Stuart Hall. I failed to meet them, and they were reluctant to come forward. The Police too promised to hunt down the alleged killers.

When the dust settled, the Deputy Vice Chancellor returned from his hideout and we started counting the cost. As usual, it was difficult to pin-point the real culprits for prosecution. Secondly, we tried to avoid taking any disciplinary action against any student, as such an act would inflame further the already tense situation; so we had to think and act proactively. We received numerous suggestions as to how we could handle a similar situation in the future. There was a suggestion that we should lay off the old security guards and recruit new ones. Fortunately, we were fully aware of the weaknesses in the Security Department. In fact, we had started doing something about it, and had begun with the recruitment of new and younger guards, educated up to the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education level or its equivalent. The new guards were being trained by the Uganda Police. We had also successfully secured the services of a senior Police Officer, on secondment from the Uganda Police Force, to head the department and help with the recruitment, training and retraining of the guards.

Secondly, we considered the possibility of equipping our security guards with firearms, but after serious consideration, we dropped the idea because of its inherent dangers. We believed that guns in the hands of the security guards could create more problems than we were trying to solve. Students by nature were provocative and were in the habit of insulting the security guards, calling them “academic dwarfs”. We reasoned that a security guard provoked into anger would not hesitate to use the gun to get even with the students, which would be a disaster. We were also not sure how our armed guards would react when confronted by a mob of angry students; or what might happen if a mob of students on rampage broke into the armoury or overpowered the armed guards and ran away with the loaded guns. We had no ready answers to these questions. In the absence of good answers, we thought it was wiser to keep the campus gun-free. That way, we were playing it safe. Furthermore, to keep and use guns, the university was required to register the Security Department as a security organisation. All these were good proposals, but they required in-depth study before we could implement them. We therefore opted for simpler alternatives.

We requested the Police to stay on for a while to reassure the students that, in the aftermath of the shooting of Alex Atega, they were providing the university with sufficient security cover. This was a backstop measure, as we worked out the more detailed security measures. In fact, soon after that shooting incident, the Uganda Police and the Military Police kept their full presence on the campus and everyone was beginning to feel secure once again. However, the murderers were still at large and plotting new attacks on the university. As the Police and the Military were reducing their numbers, another student, this time a female residing in the CCE Complex was shot dead outside her room, on March 31, 2001. Apparently, the gunman had sneaked into the university unnoticed. The female, Barbara Mwesigye, a second year Bachelor of Library and Information

Science (BLIS) student who hailed from Mbarara District, had been out and someone had brought her back and dropped her near her hall at about 4 o'clock in the morning. I was in Entebbe, attending a meeting of the HYPERLINK "<mailto:I@mak.com>" \h I@mak.com when I was informed of the incident, which occurred in the early hours of a Saturday. Professor Elly Sabiiti who was then Dean of Agriculture conveyed the news, which someone at Makerere had called and given him, to me. My first reaction was "Surely, not again". I was devastated. I failed to comprehend how, in a space of a month, a gunman would once again dare enter the university campus and shoot dead another student, moreover in the presence of the Police. I could not help wondering whether this was not part of a grand conspiracy to sabotage us! But the trouble was that I had no way of figuring out who the conspirators were. Before I received communication from Professor Epelu Opio and Mr John Ekudu, I was at a loss as to what to do. Fortunately, Professor Epelu Opio called soon after. After a rundown on the information gathered so far about the circumstances under which the student had met her death, he assured me that he was working closely with the Dean of Students and the Police to diffuse the tension. He was trying to avoid a repeat of what happened when Alex Adega was shot dead. He further assured me that although, and as would be expected, the students had started demonstrating, the demonstrations were so far peaceful and confined to the university campus. The Police were determined to keep it that way so there was no need for me to rush back to the university. If the situation warranted my presence, he would let me know. I tried to concentrate on the work I was supposed to be doing at Entebbe with a lot of difficulty. All the morale I had at the beginning of the meeting had evaporated at the news of another fatal shooting incident at the university. Throughout the day, I kept in touch with my colleagues at Makerere by phone. Fortunately, with the timely intervention of some Ministers and other senior Government and security officials like Captain Francis and Colonel Mayombo, the crisis ended without damage.

By the time I returned from Entebbe in the evening, all was quiet, but I would have expected most students were in a sombre mood and grief-stricken. They too appeared to be confused. They were not sure who was next on the killers' list. After the burial of Barbara Mwesigye, we intensified our efforts to beef up security. Even President Museveni was concerned about the killing of students. He paid a personal visit to the university, first to convey his condolences to the bereaved families of the dead students and to the university community. Secondly, he wanted to familiarise himself with the kind of security arrangements that were in place at the university. He gave us many tips on how we could improve on our security and ensured that the Military Police that had left the university would be returned until the wave of insecurity the country was experiencing at that time was brought under control. Unfortunately, the killers were still at large, but the President assured us and the country of the Government's determination to

find the killers and bring them to book. I recall a programme Professor Nelson Sewankambo, Dr Nakanyike Musisi and I had to present on WBS Television to explain to the public the objectives of the Capacity Building Programme we had launched in some decentralised districts in Uganda under the HYPERLINK “mailto:I@mak.com” \h I@mak.com. The Television programme was aired soon after the second shooting incident. During the phone-in session, the moderator had a tough time keeping the viewing audience focused on the topic under discussion. He kept reminding the callers that the programme was about new and innovative ways of building capacity for service delivery in decentralised districts and not about security at Makerere, but to no avail. I agreed with him that I would answer the questions on security at the campus as well, and most callers were asking why students were being killed and why the university administration was so lenient with students who broke the university regulations; and what we were doing to ensure there would be no repeat of such incidents. Others blamed us for failing to repair the perimeter fence, while others wanted to see a more serious enforcement of university regulations and strict policing of the students by the university authorities; something akin to what happens in boarding secondary schools. I laboured to answer all the questions as best as I could, emphasising that the university was different from a secondary school. Whereas in the secondary school, the headteacher polices the students; in the university, students police themselves. This included not engaging in reckless actions that would compromise one’s personal security. The university exercised minimum control over its students, because it is preparing them for their future roles and responsibilities in society.

While waiting for the Government to improve the security country-wide, and with the approval of the University Council which was also equally concerned about the rising insecurity on the university campus, we moved fast to implement some measures that would minimise the level of insecurity at the main campus and at its annexes at Mulago and Kabanyolo. We had long realised that communication was a big problem, so we decided to install a campus-wide radio network with the control centre in the Security Department building. After obtaining permission from the Uganda Police to operate the system, a frequency from the Uganda Communications Commission and shopping around for the most reliable equipment, we settled on a Motorola system. Wilkins Telecommunication Company, based in Kampala, supplied the equipment which included transmitters, repeaters and handsets, popular known as “walkie-talkies”. The company also agreed to train some members of staff and the security personnel on the use of the radio sets and the communication terminology. For the first time, the security guards deployed at the university’s main gate, other gates and strategic locations throughout the university could communicate with among themselves, the university’s Chief Security Officer, the Dean of Students, the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor day and night by radio. Initially, funds had limited the number of handsets we could

buy and places like Kabanyolo were not covered. Later, we were able to raise more money to purchase more handsets. Hearing a security guard at the main gate calling Mike 1 or Mike 6 or any other Mikes, which were the code names for the various users of the radio, via the control room or “I copy” or the final “roger” was, to me, nothing but a happy feeling. I was happy because we did not have to wait for the Government to provide the money. We had put up the system with internally-generated funds. The signal was coming strongly and clearly. The system had one other interesting feature, an in-built multiple channel that made private communication possible. In short, the system met our specifications and requirements. In due course, we had bought and installed a booster at Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute at Kabanyolo. Once the booster was installed, we could monitor the security situation there as well for 24 hours, seven days a week. In addition to the wireless communication system, we purchased a pick-up truck fitted with the necessary seats at the back to carry security personnel, a radio and other security equipment for patrolling the main campus and the annexes. Our job then, was to monitor the goings-on within the university campus and beyond, and when we encountered a problem, we would immediately alert the Police. When the problem did not warrant Police intervention, we would take corrective measures immediately. Given the recent tragic incidents, security was now our topmost priority. Unfortunately, the perimeter fence repairs remained a non-starter; no money was forthcoming from the Government Treasury to undertake the repair work, and the university did not have sufficient funds of its own to do it alone. Besides these measures, we advised the incoming Guild President to create a Ministry of Security, which he gladly accepted and implemented. We also sensitised the students about the need to be security conscious all the time and to avoid situations likely to endanger their personal safety. With these measures in place, we witnessed a dramatic improvement in the overall security situation in the university. For the Deputy Vice Chancellor, it was a big sigh of relief. The Government too lived up to the President’s promise. Operation Wembley, headed by Colonel Elly Kayanja, did so much to rid Kampala and the country of several hard-core criminals. We later learnt that Colonel Kayanja’s men had killed the gunmen suspected to have shot Alex Adega and Barbara Mwesigye dead. He was one of the most notorious gang leaders in Kampala, and was killed in one of the Wembley operations. By the time Yusuf Kiranda took over as the Guild President in 2002, security at the university was firmly under control, at least until I left in June 2004. Kiranda, a BA Education student, was the last Guild President I worked with to the end of his term. The next President, Ronald Senkubuge Mukasa, assumed office in April 2004, barely two months before my retirement and was the only President I was unable to swear in. Professor Epelu Opio performed the function on my behalf. By the time I left, we were once again enjoying the kind of peace and quiet that we had begun to enjoy in the mid- and late-1990s. Because of our tireless effort to instil discipline in our young and sometimes over-zealous students, the

number of disciplinary cases reported to the Disciplinary Committee of Council declined sharply. Besides constantly reminding that students of the negative impact excessive acts of indiscipline had on them and the university in general, we also instituted new measures that required the students' hall governments to constitute disciplinary committees to handle some cases of discipline at the hall level and refer only the difficult ones to the University Council's Disciplinary Committee. We were interested in empowering the students to police themselves or, as one of my colleagues would say, "we were giving them the rope to hang themselves".

### **University Staff – Unclogging Hiring, Promoting and Firing**

I have devoted a considerable amount of time and space to students, precisely because they are central to the University. As one of my colleagues used to say, "students are the university's principal clients". We have seen how they explode their youthful energies in worthwhile and sometimes worthless causes. We have also seen how Guild Presidents disgraced themselves by engaging in unethical and outright acts of corruption; how close these Presidents, and the student body in general, brought the Students' Guild to the brink of collapse through their reckless acts, as well as how we tried to clean up their acts with some degree of success. It is also a fact that in most African universities, the undergraduates constitute more than 90% of the student population, which makes them one of the university's key stakeholders. Makerere University is no exception, although as we shall see later, it was slowly evolving from a predominantly undergraduate teaching institution into a research and graduate university.

Equally important to a university is the quality of its academic staff, collectively referred to as the faculty in some countries. Prestigious universities are so precisely because they have extremely high-quality faculties, made up of professors who are leaders or leading experts in their academic fields. Without this calibre of staff, a university is unlikely to engage in first-rated research capable of commanding international recognition, and be able provide high quality teaching. It is therefore critical that a university keeps its staff well motivated and resourced. No doubt, a good salary is a key motivator. We now know that low pay and unattractive terms of service have been, and will continue to be, the main push factors in the exodus of Africa's best brains and the constant staff strikes which have become a common feature on the campuses of many African universities in recent years. However, it would be naïve to assume that a good salary alone is enough to keep staff highly motivated. There are other factors university dons consider as important as competitive salaries. These are sometimes referred to as the invisible benefits, one of which is promotion.

At the time we took over the administration in 1993, Makerere University was renowned for its notoriously long promotion and appointment delays. I was surprised to discover that several members of staff had applied for promotion to

various ranks for which they were qualified, but no action had been taken on their applications for over five years. Upon investigations, we discovered some serious flaws in the system. One problem was that, despite the presence of the Appointment and Promotions Committees in every faculty and department, most of these committees were not processing applications on time, because meetings were not taking place. This was one of the causes of the inefficiencies in the system. For some reason, the committees were not meeting as regularly as they should, which in turn bogged down the work of the Appointments' Board which, of course, had its own problems too. There were also many occasions when the Board failed to meet due to the lack of a quorum, because some board members were consistently absent. When Professor Apollo Nsibambi became Minister of Education and Sports in 1998, he appointed me a full member of the Appointments' Board. Before, I was simply attending the Board meetings in an unofficial advisory role. Professor Nsibambi argued that it had been a big oversight to keep the Vice Chancellor, who was the chief executive officer of the university, at the periphery of such an important organ as the Appointments Board. My appointment to the Board somehow eased the quorum problem.

One consequence of the Appointments Board's failure to meet regularly was the inevitable accumulation of a huge backlog of business. The external vetters, who failed to file their reports to the Board, even after several reminders had been written to them, also contributed significantly to the paralysis and near breakdown of the system. As we have seen elsewhere, under the 1970 Act, amended in 1975 by decree, the Minister of Education was the ultimate appointing authority for the Academic Registrar, the University Secretary, Deans, Directors and Professors for the university. In this case, the Appointments Board's responsibility was to identify suitable candidates for the Minister to appoint or promote. It was the prerogative of the Minister to issue both the instrument of appointment and promotion. However, given the nature of their job and office, Ministers are always busy. Even if the Appointments Board was able to do its job efficiently, the process would still be incomplete until the Minister had acted. This was another bottleneck in the system. In most cases, the Minister would not be able to act promptly. Occasionally, he needed time to consult about an appointment or a promotion before giving his approval. It was not always a foregone conclusion that once the Appointments Board at Makerere had done its work and forwarded its recommendations to him, all the Minister had to do was to endorse the Board's decisions. There were occasions when a Minister of Education disagreed with the Board, so the Minister too had an active input in the process. However, when Professor Nsibambi took over as Minister of Education and Sports, he found a way of working on Makerere documents expeditiously. In fact, when he was not too busy, it would take him less than a day to approve an appointment or a promotion. Makerere had been waiting for this big breakthrough and this was it. As they say, sometimes it pays dividends to have one of your own in an important position.

Naturally, the excessively long delays frustrated and angered staff. I remember a colleague from the Faculty of Agriculture, who had applied for promotion three years earlier, but had just received his promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. This came to me in total surprise and disbelief. He confessed that since he had not received any response from the Appointments Board, he had long given up. He had come to the inevitable conclusion that Makerere University had stopped promoting its staff, no matter how hard they worked. His promotion came after we had cleaned up the system. In fact, there were many members of staff who were prepared to work for a low salary, as long as the university recognised and appreciated their hard work. Promoting staff who deserved it was one of the important ways they expected the university to show its gratitude. Certainly, staff hoped that with our being there now, the Appointments Board would change for the better. That was our challenge. Therefore, we had to work hard and fast to solve the problems of the excessive delays in processing both appointments and promotions. Another reason staff could not be promoted had to do with the establishment. Under the old structure inherited from the colonial era, each department had a fixed number of positions. In most departments, there was one position for a professor, and once there was a sitting professor, that was it. No one else could become a professor in that department, however qualified they were until the incumbent retired, resigned or died. Reforming the process was therefore an important step towards restoring confidence in the system. The University Secretary was key to the reforms we attempted to implement. Unfortunately, time had run out for Reverend David Sentongo. He retired before this crucial exercise began.

As luck would have it, when the job was advertised in 1994, Avitus Tibarimbasa, whom I had left behind at ITEK as Institute Secretary was one of the applicants. Avitus Tibarimbasa was a man of vision, with lots of new ideas. The other advantage he had for the job was the wealth of administrative experience he had accumulated over the years, and in particular as ITEK's Secretary. He was shortlisted for the interview and emerged the best candidate. The Board Chairman forwarded his name to the Minister for appointment. The Minister found him fit for the job and appointed him straight away as the new University Secretary. The handover from David Sentongo to him was a smooth one. In fact, Reverend Sentongo offered him many useful tips about the job, including the dos and don'ts and the important role the University Secretary had to play as the university's accounting officer. Avitus quickly settled in and was soon at work. Like me, for him, the return to Makerere was an exciting home-coming. Unfortunately, the press did not spare him the wrath of negative reporting, a lot of which was based on totally wrong information. He quickly got used to it and started ignoring the speculative stories about him and the university in general that appeared in the local press from time to time. Occasionally, the reports about the university were so bad that we were compelled to rebut them to correct the

false impressions the stories conveyed to the general public. Many years later when he was leaving Makerere for a career in politics, he showed me a heap of newspaper cuttings of the horrific articles written about him and his coming back to Makerere as University Secretary. I had not seen some of the articles. However, the press aside, streamlining the procedures in the Appointments Board and clearing the backlog, which had clogged the system, were some of the immediate challenges he had to handle.

Working closely with the Board's Secretary, the Deans and the Heads of Departments, he was soon on top of things. In an attempt to streamline the procedures and processes, we decided that external vetters would submit their reports within three months of receipt of documents for vetting. An external vetter who failed to file a report within three months was required to return all publications and other documents sent to him or her. The Academic Registrar was under instruction to identify a new vetter and to blacklist those who had failed to comply. The university's internal Appointments and Promotions Committees too were reminded of their obligation to expedite decisions about candidates who had applied for either promotion or appointment. The Academic Registrar, Dr Mukwanason Hyuha, assured us that he was determined to clean up the vetting process that was responsible for much of the backlog in the Appointments Board. Mr Tibarimbasa too decided to increase the frequency of the Board meetings with fixed dates. When Professor Josephine Nambooze left in 1995, the Appointments Board operated without a substantive chairperson for a while. Dr Stephen Kagoda, who was one of the long-serving members, was requested to act as chair of the Board. We kept reminding the Minister to quickly appoint a new Board Chairperson, because we thought it was irregular for the Board to operate without a substantive chairperson. Our efforts paid off.

The news of the appointment of Associate Professor George Mondo Kagonyera as the new Board Chairman was a welcome relief. Before the President of Uganda appointed him as a Cabinet Minister, Dr Mondo Kagonyera, was a member of staff of Makerere University and had served as Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine for a number of years. He had also weathered the storm of Idi Amin's rule and the subsequent difficult times of the Obote II administration. A Veterinary Medicine PhD graduate of the University of California, Dr Kongoyera was an accomplished academic with a very pleasant personality and a good sense of humour. His appointment helped to ease the work of the Board and its secretariat. Despite structural problems at the time, the Board had several distinguished members who had served for a long time. The list included Dr Joseph Byamugisha, one of Kampala's prominent lawyers and one of the pioneer lecturers in the Faculty of Law at Makerere. He was the Board's legal mind. Other members were Professor Lutalo Bosa, the former Deputy Vice Chancellor; Dr Charles Wana Etyem, former Head of the Department of Civil Engineering in the Faculty of Technology and

Deputy Managing Director of National Water and Sewerage Corporation and Mrs Florence Nekyon, the only woman on the Board. Mr Azarius Baryaruha, an Economist and former Minister in the Lule Government was one of the new members. By all accounts, it was an efficient Board. All we had to do was to work very hard to ensure staff stopped blaming it for the inefficiencies in the university which it was not responsible for.

To ease communication and mobility for the Appointments Board Secretariat, I surrendered one of the cars attached to the Vice Chancellor's Office for its use. Unfortunately, it was an old car and so frequently broke down, requiring costly repairs, but it helped for a while. In spite of the massive documents they had to reproduce – most of them confidential – the Board Secretariat had no photocopier of its own; so we provided one. We also made sure the Secretariat had a working telephone line and computers. The facilitation we provided went a long way to improve the efficiency of the Secretariat.

In less than a year, the Board had finished with the heavy backlog and was now handling new cases. Staff began to see rapid appointments and promotions. In the same vain, we were able to solve the perennial problem of lack of openings for promotions. We came up with the idea of a super-numerary scheme. This innovation converted a fixed establishment into a semi-floating one. It eliminated what had been a serious bottleneck for the Appointments Board for a long time, as it allowed the Board to promote qualified candidates without too much restriction imposed by the establishment. Under the new scheme, promotions would not be held back for lack of openings. It was a totally new concept at Makerere and many members of staff took time to understand it. Because some thought it was not possible to promote when there was no vacancy, the old system persisted for some time. The University Secretary had to give a lot of explanation to get the message across. Some departments were able to respond quickly, and these included the Department of Crop Science in the Faculty of Agriculture which eventually became a fine example of how the new scheme worked. Ordinarily, most departments had one or two professorial positions in their establishment, but under the super-numerary arrangement, this department ended up with four full Professors: Elly Sabiiti, David Osiru, Adipala Ekwamu and Patrick Rubaihayo. The Department of Physics in the Faculty of Science too had, at one time, three Professors instead of one: John Ilukor (now deceased), Eldad Banda and Yusito Kaahwa.

In theory, it was now possible for a department to have all its members of staff at the rank of full Professor. Some people I talked to at the time said that it was not possible. They could not see that happen at Makerere, but the truth was that the probability did exist. In fact, I was happy to see many well-qualified colleagues rising fast through the ranks, partly because of the new policy. As I saw more and more promotions, I started taking count of new Professors, Associate

Professors and Senior Lecturers and made the inevitable comparison with what I found in place in 1993. I only stopped when they became too many to count. The statistics were impressive, and I had reason to be happy. We even coined the phrase, “one promoted oneself”, meaning that all one had to do was to keep publishing good papers in good journals. As we have seen elsewhere, promotion at Makerere, like in many universities around the world, was and still is dependent on publications. The dictum, “publish or perish” has never been forgotten. However, the picture was not always rosy for some people. They were many who applied for promotion, only to be disappointed when the Appointments Board turned down their applications, either because the papers required were inadequate or they were of low quality, according to vetters’ reports. Whenever an application for promotion was turned down, the Appointments Board, through its Secretariat, always endeavoured to provide an explanation for the rejection. The areas of weakness, which required improvement before the candidate could resubmit the application, were also pointed out. Some members of staff took the advice in good faith and did what was asked of them, while others simply gave up. A minority of them became extremely resentful of the Board. The vetter’s report counted a lot and was always a key factor in determining whether one could be promoted or not. If the report was negative, the Board would not promote. Veters had to be explicit and not to submit non-committal or vague reports. They had to recommend for promotion or for no promotion and their decisions had to be backed up with clearly stated reasons.

By and large, we had succeeded in streamlining the Appointments Board, thanks in part to the hard working staff in the Board’s Secretariat. However, one of our disappointments was our inability to retain Deputy University Secretaries in charge of the Board for long. For some reason, we thought the turnover was a little above average. It was not uncommon for the academic staff to leave the university even before the ink on their appointment letters had dried. The administrative staff was more stable. For sure, the job was demanding and entailed a high degree of integrity and an above-average sense of responsibility. Journalists and some ill-intentioned people are always on the look-out for sensitive information and confidential documents. When there are leaks, the university is embarrassed and the Appointments Board takes full responsibility for it. So, whoever is in charge of the Secretariat has to be extremely careful with documents. In fact, whoever works there faces this challenge on almost a daily basis. On top of this important responsibility, the Appointments Board Secretariat is quite a busy place. It receives a daily constant stream of people, who come in to find out the fate of their applications for appointment or promotion.

The Secretary had to write the minutes that contained the record of the Board’s decisions promptly and accurately, and communicate this within a reasonable period of time. Also, the agenda for a meeting had to be prepared and circulated

to all members, together with the minutes of the previous meeting, at least a week before the meeting. In short, it is a stressful office. In the old system, management was not allowed to act on Board's decisions until the minutes were confirmed, unless the Board explicitly gave the University Management permission to do so. However, the procedure changed in 2001 when a new Board came into office. The new Board wanted quicker action on its decisions. Worse still, the Board had to meet monthly to avoid accumulation of unfinished business. This put more pressure on the Secretariat. It is also interesting to note that the Appointments Board is one of the university organs that consume a lot of stationery, hence, the University Bursar and the Purchasing Unit were also under constant pressure to provide the Board's Secretariat with all the required stationery and other inputs necessary for the smooth running of the Board's affairs. I was tempted to believe that in some way, the stressful nature of the job was a contributory factor to the high turnover of Board Secretaries. Some people could just not cope with this kind of work pressure. Shortly before my appointment as Vice Chancellor in 1993, the Board had lost Dr Mugerwa. Ms Evelyn Nyakoojo took over as Board Secretary, in acting capacity. She too did not last long in the job. She left for a new job with an international non-governmental organisation with operations in Uganda. Mrs Jamillah Kamulegeya took over, also in an acting capacity, until a substantive Deputy University Secretary was recruited in 1995.

As the new University Secretary was recruited, the Board decided that a Deputy Secretary be recruited at the same time to take charge of its Secretariat. Dr James Muliira from the University of Nairobi, who was one of the strong candidates for the post of University Secretary, accepted the appointment. However, he had also applied for the Associate Professor post in the Department of History, and the Board had gone ahead to process his application. The external vetter's report was positive, and Dr Muliira had a difficult choice to make; either to stay in administration or accept the Associate Professorship at the Department of History. He opted for the latter, which I thought was a wise choice. In academia, there were better opportunities to progress and to excel than in administration. He had to leave. In his farewell speech to the Board, he said that during the short time he had worked as head of the Secretariat, he had learnt how the Appointments Board discharged its duties and responsibilities; with impartiality, honesty, professionalism and integrity. Mrs Jamillah Kamulegeya, who had worked alongside Evelyn Nyakoojo, stepped in while the Board was arranging to recruit a new head for its Secretariat. Unfortunately for us, no sooner had Mrs Kamulegeya settled in than President Yoweri Museveni appointed her a full-time Commissioner with the Public Service Commission. For a while after Jamillah Kamulegeya had left, Mrs Dora Zaake acted as head of the Secretariat until Mrs Sarah Serufusa's appointment as Deputy Secretary in charge of the Appointments Board in 2000. Sarah Serufusa was no stranger to Makerere. She had studied and worked there for many years, and had left the university service when her

husband took up an international assignment. Soft spoken, but very efficient and capable of taking care of highly confidential and sensitive documents, she was one person who had been on the job for the longest time in recent years.

After the Presidential and Parliamentary elections of 2001, President Museveni decided to appoint the incumbent Board Chairperson, Professor Mondo Kagonyera, as the full Cabinet Minister for General Duties in the Office of the Prime Minister. At the same time, he was also the Member of Parliament for Rubaabo County in new Kanungu District. Because of his new roles as Minister in the Uganda Government, the Constitution of Uganda barred him from holding other positions of responsibility in a public institution, so he had to relinquish his position as Chairperson of the Appointments Board. Once again, the Board found itself without a substantive Chairperson, and again the remaining Board members unanimously chose Dr Stephen Kagoda to act as Chairperson. The Board did not have a substantive Chairperson until the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act came into effect in April 2001. The new Act marked the end of the old University Council and Appointments Board. Under the new Act of 2001, the Appointments Board ceased to be a parallel body to the University Council; instead, it became a special Committee of the Council.

The super-numerary idea was excellent, but did not solve all the university's staffing problems. As we shall see later, the increasing student numbers were beginning to exert a lot of pressure on the existing establishment. The super-numerary scheme made promotions possible, but left the overall establishment unchanged. Time had come to start thinking seriously about expanding the university establishment as a coping mechanism for large student numbers and new programmes. However, we had to go about it in a systematic way. It was no longer possible to apportion new posts to the departments in an ad hoc way. The first step in the process was to work out the cost implication of every new post. We decided that, before a department applied for new posts, it had to work out the financial implications of expanding the establishment as accurately as possible. We made this a requirement because the university's financial resources were very limited indeed. We had to take into serious consideration the question of the wage bill and its affordability. The Establishment and Administration Committee was a standing committee of the University Council responsible for creating new positions and abolishing those that had become redundant. The Vice Chancellor chaired this committee. In the past, the committee rarely met and when it did, it approved very few new posts. I was one of the lucky Heads of Departments when, in the 1980s, our request to expand the establishment of the Chemistry Department was partially granted. The committee raised it from fifteen positions to twenty-one, with provision for a second Professor. However, as the pressure for more positions mounted, we decided to look for a scientific method of arriving at an optimal number of positions for each teaching department.

Kibirige Mayanja and his team in the Planning and Development Department were tasked to come up with the solution in the form of a scientific formula. Mayanja and his team worked out an elegant formula that allowed any teaching department requesting more positions to know whether there was a need for the positions. The formula worked on either staff/student ratio or staff/workload ratio. Without going into the nitty gritty of the mathematics behind the formula, it was possible to tell whether the positions asked for were justified. Mayanja's formula simplified the committee's work. Whenever we received a request for new positions, we referred the request to Mayanja to do the computations. In majority of cases, the committee went by the Planning and Development Department's recommendation. Mayanja's numbers were usually lower than what the departments wanted. The departments were asking for more positions, but Mayanja told them that according to his computation, the department was actually over-established and if anything, the existing positions had to be reduced. Therefore, on several occasions, Heads of Departments did not agree with Mayanja's computations and many left the committee's meetings disappointed, but the formula was the best tool we could use to arrive at a scientifically worked-out establishment instead of depending on guess work.

When we realised that we could not accommodate all new positions on the Government payroll without stretching the university budget beyond breaking point, we encouraged the departments with sufficient funds of their own to recruit part-time staff to take some pressure off the few permanent staff. These were over and above the part-timers on the university payroll. Many departments, particularly in the Faculties of Arts, Social Sciences, Technology, the Business School and School of Education took advantage of this arrangement. This was the first time departments were using their own resources to hire and pay staff outside the official university establishment and budget. However, we had to be mindful of the obligation to maintain the requisite standards. Therefore, we subjected every part-time and temporary staff employed under this arrangement to the same academic and professional requirements as the regular staff. However, it was the department's responsibility to go out and identify people with the right expertise and willingness to offer their services to the university on a part-time basis. This scheme came in handy when the University Council halted staff recruitment, because the university budget was not enough to pay for new staff and at the same time cover the annual salary increments and promotions. The University Council wanted to go even beyond part-time staff recruitment. It wanted the departments to hire full-time staff and meet their costs in full. Under this arrangement, which we referred to as the parallel establishment, the Appointments Board would recruit the staff and the departments would take over their emoluments and other financial obligations.

In essence, the parallel establishment meant that a department could have four categories of staff. The regular full-time staff on the university payroll; full-

time staff paid for by the faculty or the department; part-time staff paid for by the university; and part-time staff paid for by the faculty or department. Much as, at first glance, this arrangement looked confusing, the intention was to reduce the constraint of Government funding on the university establishment. The university could not expand beyond the approved wage bill. For a long time, the Ministry of Finance paid whatever wage bill the university submitted. This had created a wrong impression that the university's wage bill was open-ended, and could accommodate every new staff the university recruited. In 1996, the Ministry of Finance decided to cap the university's wage bill. As a result, the university had to go slow on recruitment. With more faculties, departments and new programmes coming on board and student numbers going up, there was no way the university would freeze staff recruitment any longer. Moreover, the university was facing mounting criticism for admitting too many students with insufficient staff to teach them. It was being blamed for compromising standards. We had to think of alternative ways of coping with these pressures. The novel parallel establishment was part of the answer. Unfortunately, at the time of my departure, the University Council had not finalised how the policy that would govern the parallel or alternative establishment would work. On a positive note, many Faculties, in particular the ones which believed they had the capacity to pay, strongly supported the idea. The part-time staff (or adjunct staff as some universities prefer to call them) played and continued to play a vital relief role. They taught both day and evening programmes.

### ***Tour d'ivoire Revisited – the Gown Gears for the Town***

Some people hold the view that a vibrant university is one that changes with changing times. It takes into account its relevance to societal needs. Perhaps not at the scale as in past, nevertheless society continues to view universities as ivory towers full of scruffy people with long beards and unkempt hair very detached from the realities of the real world where the real people live. Admittedly, this is an unrealistic and stereotype view but for some reason, this age-old stereotype image of a university has persisted to this day. The old "town and gown" mentality still governs the university-society relationship. One only needs to study the history of Oxford University in the UK to taste the bitter experience that the university went through as it tried to co-exist alongside the residents of the town of Oxford. The feuds between the two communities became so bad that some disgusted students and a few of their teachers decided to flee Oxford. They pitched camp at Cambridge. In essence, the now famous Cambridge University was born out of the co-existence problem between Oxford University and the community, which had gone sour. Scholars of the origins, evolution and history of universities are well aware of the reasons why society tends to see universities in a negative light. Perhaps the origins of the university as we know it today has a lot to do with these

perceptions. We do know that, in the beginning, universities were not founded to serve the interests of society per se; that role came much later. Universities were exclusively communities of scholars, much like monks, whose preoccupation was to pursue knowledge and the truth for their own sake. Indeed, they were ivory towers of some sort. The pursuit of knowledge was for the aesthetic of the intellect, and not for the immediate application to the problems of society. If society derived benefits from these intellectual pursuits, it was usually coincidental to the real mission of the university.

In 1953, James Watson, an American and Francis Crick, discovered the three dimensional structure of Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid (DNA) molecule, dubbed “the secret of life”. Through this fundamental discovery, scientists had cracked the code of life, nature’s secret blueprint. The two young scientists toiled away in their laboratories at Cambridge University forgoing visits to the pub and Saturday cricket matches, both passionate pastimes of the English, just because of one intellectual aim – to unravel the structure of DNA. I doubt whether they had any inkling of the enormous benefits their fundamental discovery would bring to mankind. I am sure theirs was simply an intellectual pursuit for the sake of expanding the frontiers of knowledge.

Like all outstanding scientists, what the two young men could best hope for after publishing their groundbreaking discovery in the prestigious journal *Nature* in 1953, was a Nobel Prize, which they deserved and received. I do not even think it ever crossed their minds that what they had discovered would earn them a Nobel Prize. I am almost certain that they did not know that sooner than later; their discovery would be helping forensic experts all over the world to convict criminals who had committed some of the most hideous crimes of murder and rape, through DNA finger printing. In the pre-DNA finger printing days, some lucky criminals used to get off the hook for lack of sufficient evidence to secure a conviction. Now DNA has helped to solve difficult cases which would have ended up as closed case files, as well as provided proof of the paternity of children with disputed claims to fatherhood. Although many of the DNA spin-offs were not anticipated at the time the discovery was made, they have been of enormous benefits to mankind. In short, society has been the greatest beneficiary of much of the intellectual thinking that goes on behind closed doors at universities and this has been so for as long as universities have been in existence. However, the relationship between universities and the immediate communities in which they are situated has been and continues to be a contradictory co-existence. On the one hand, society regards people who have attended university as its intelligentsia; on the other hand, society continues to castigate universities as good for nothing institutions, as society expects universities to constantly justify their existence. In response, universities have been making a deliberate effort to be seen as institutions of relevance to society. Makerere has been one of such universities

which has come under constant attack for being irrelevant and unresponsive to the needs of society. It had to respond in some demonstrable way.

I am inclined to believe that it was the industrial revolution in the 19th Century Europe, and in particular in Victorian Britain, that catalysed the new kind of thinking which inspired the creation of what we can call community-oriented universities, a mission deeply rooted in service to society. What the upper class citizenry and the medieval universities of Europe regarded as trades, such as engineering, which could only be learnt from a master through apprenticeship, suddenly became respectable university disciplines in the new generation universities. The American land grant universities exemplify this concept very well. The idea was to make the university truly relevant to the community. From then on, the community would have a big voice in what the universities ought to teach and the expected standards of the graduates who come out of them. Suddenly, society realised it had a stake in what was going on inside the universities, because it was now bankrolling them. Public universities were drawing their income from taxpayers, so naturally, they had to behave like any public corporation. This in turn called for not only a change of mindset, but also change of curriculum orientation and a new relationship between the university and the community. In some countries, the political leadership had assumed a lot of say in who taught at a state-owned university, and also approved of what was taught there. State control had tightened the noose around public universities and phrases like “academic freedom” became mere rhetoric. Where state control was less pronounced, universities while maintaining much of their traditional mandate of generating and transmitting new knowledge, had to respond to the realities on the ground. They had to design new courses they believed suited the needs of society. Soon, we began to hear jargons, such as demand-driven courses, market-driven courses, tailor-made courses and a lot more. The universities were taking on a new dimension which, inevitably, led to a lot of soul searching among university academics. The third mandate of “service to community” was now sounding louder than ever before. The new thinking sometimes meant a painful break with the old and long cherished academic traditions. The writing was on the wall that, if universities did not embrace change but rather stuck to their old ways, they risked being totally irrelevant and producing graduates that nobody had use for or graduates who were obsolete before they graduated. In fact, this became more apparent in the late 1970s through to the 1980s as universities in Africa grappled with the kind of problems we encountered earlier on in this book. Certainly, Makerere was not ready to be written off as an irrelevant institution. The gown was ready to go to town.

As we know, Makerere had started as a simple Technical School but, over time, it evolved into a typical classical university. Much as it enjoyed an enviable reputation among other African universities, the public was increasingly

questioning the incidental benefits it offered to society. The ivory tower label was getting a lot harder to shake off. It had one of the best Medical Schools in sub-Saharan Africa, but rightly or wrongly, the fine doctors it was passing out were increasingly accused of being hospital-based. Its engineers too were described as excellent in theory, but mediocre in practice. What all this meant was that Makerere was an elitist institution and, like all classical universities, it was training graduates who kept a safe distance away from blue-collar jobs. A degree from Makerere had come to symbolise an escape from drudgery. The voices calling into question the relevance of Makerere as a public-funded university were growing louder.

For example, in January 1970, the then President Milton Obote set up a Visitation Committee chaired by Justice K.T. Faud, who at the time was head of the Law Development Centre, to inquire into the Makerere University College in view of the recommendation that on July 1, 1970 the college, like its sister colleges in Kenya and Tanzania, should become a separate national university. Number one on the list of terms of reference for the committee was a probe into the courses of study the college was offering and their applicability to the development and needs of Uganda and East Africa (at that time, the first East African Community was still in existence). Among the memoranda the Faud Committee received, the one from the college's students was very explicit on the issue of the college's usefulness to the country. The students expressed the view that all research undertaken at Makerere was irrelevant to Uganda's development. They blamed it partly on the expatriate staff that they believed had no stake in Uganda, but were dominating all the academic positions at the college. They concluded by advising that the national university that was coming into being should take immediate steps to redress this problem, lest it would be another ivory tower like the college it was replacing; the teaching and research had to reflect the aspirations of the people. This was not a picture to be proud of. It just set Makerere on a long and arduous transformation process that has continued up till today. However, the question was how should it be done?

The Faud Visitation Committee recommended that the new Makerere should be a different institution in academic character, outlook and role from Makerere University College, which was born out of the colonial era amidst capitalism and foreign domination. In other words, Makerere University, Kampala was to be a people-centred institution, with Ugandans constituting the bulk of its academic and administrative staff. Ugandans knew their problems and needs better, and were therefore best placed to solve them. That was how the argument went, back in 1970. Besides putting in place an independent Appointments Board to take care of the recruitment and to ensure that there was no slamming of doors on Ugandans qualified to teach at Makerere, as was the case when the management of the college was firmly in the hands of expatriates, the Government started

setting priorities for the university. The Faculty of Technology is a good illustration of the intentions of the Government in 1970. The name itself was a sign that, at Makerere, the faculty's role would not be limited to the narrow Engineering disciplines alone, but would be much broader. The duration of the Engineering courses in the new faculty would be a year longer than the course offered at Nairobi. A Nairobi BSc in Engineering was three years; the equivalent at Makerere was four years. The Government of Uganda wanted to train an all-round Engineer whose technical expertise went beyond the narrow confines of his or her specialist discipline. For instance, it was Government's desire that an Electrical Engineer should also have sufficient working knowledge of other similar disciplines like Civil and Mechanical Engineering and vice versa. Therefore, the first year was common to all. Specialisation was deferred to the second year of study. The first year was also meant to give the students hands-on experience of what the discipline entailed. Students spent much of the year on industrial training and on common courses like technical drawing. This is different from Nairobi, where specialisation began in the first year of study.

The consultants commissioned to advise the Government of Uganda on Engineering education at Makerere had proposed that Makerere should offer only two engineering qualifications instead of the traditional three offered at Nairobi. They recommended combining Electrical and Mechanical Engineering into a single Electromechanical degree course, while keeping Civil Engineering as a separate discipline. Although the Government had accepted the recommendation, it later dropped it, preferring the Nairobi mode. However, Government upheld the four-year degree period. This arrangement produced an interesting scenario. In 1970, Makerere University admitted the first batch of Engineering students to a four-year course. At the same time, under the Inter-University Committee of East Africa, several Ugandan students went to the University of Nairobi to study Engineering. After three years, the students who went to Nairobi graduated, while those who went to Makerere had a year to go. I recall people like Paul Sagala, James Higenyi and James Bukulu Sempa, among others from the University of Nairobi, joining the Faculty of Technology in 1973 as Special Assistants, while people like Stephen Kagoda were still students. Stephen Kagoda and his fellow Makerere pioneer Engineering students had to wait for a year before they joined their Nairobi-trained counterparts in the employment market. Incidentally, Stephen Kagoda holds a record of being the first student in the Faculty of Technology at Makerere, and the only one in the pioneer Engineering class of 1970 to have graduated with a First Class Honours BSc Engineering degree, specialising in Mechanical Engineering.

In a further bid to make Makerere University relevant to the needs of Uganda, the Government selected the priority areas it wanted the university to focus its attention on.

As an illustration, the Electrical Engineering degree course offered in the Faculty of Technology emphasised Power Engineering, because the Uganda Electricity Board (UEB) needed such engineers. The other option was Telecommunications, because the Uganda Posts and Telecommunications Corporation required Telecommunications engineers and Makerere had to provide them. The two organisations were major Government parastatals. Civil Engineering put emphasis on highways purposely to provide the Ministry of Works with highway engineers. The other major option in Civil Engineering was Water Engineering for the Water Corporation. The Department of Political Science and Public Administration put emphasis on Public Administration to provide the Government with District Commissioners and, to some extent, Permanent Secretaries. It also provided some training for future Ugandan diplomats through its Diplomacy and International Relations programme. Most of the Law graduates from the Faculty of Law at Makerere joined the Attorney General's Chambers and could not be called to the bar of Uganda, until taking and passing a compulsory one-year postgraduate course offered at the Law Development Centre. The Centre is a stone throw away from the south of the university campus. It took over what used to be the Labour College, which Government set up specifically for this function. When Government realised the importance and economic potential of its forests, it set up a Department of Forestry to train foresters with expertise in the science and management of tropical rather than temperate forests. The department was set up in 1969/70, with funds and technical expertise provided by the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD). One of the criticisms the Government had not yet addressed before the coup of 1971 was the university's inability to train practising farmers and graduates with expertise in value addition and agro-processing. The majority of the graduates of the Faculty of Agriculture ended up as agricultural officers or research scientists in the various government-owned Agricultural Research Stations dotted all over the country.

Another Government initiative to make Makerere more useful to the nation and the region involved the setting up of the Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics in the Faculty of Science. Realising that statisticians were in short supply, not only in Uganda but throughout Africa, Uganda and other Anglophone countries in Africa requested the UNDP to set up an institute to train personnel for them in the disciplines of Statistics, National Accounting and Demography. The UNDP agreed to set up the institute at Makerere as a regional programme. It started with a BSc course that combined Statistics with Economics, offered in the Faculty of Science. However, in the mid-1970s, the institute initiated its own programmes; starting with the Bachelor of Statistics. At the same time, it became an autonomous academic unit with its own Faculty Board. Uganda's political turmoil had reduced the participation of other English-speaking African countries in the institute's programmes until recently. Although few countries sent students to the institute, its Advisory Council, which represents all member-countries

that signed the original charter of cooperation and which the Vice Chancellor of Makerere chairs, continued to hold its annual general meetings on the originally agreed rotational basis. After its liberation and independence in 1994, South Africa also signed the charter and became a member of the Advisory Council. South African students have been studying at the institute ever since. The annual Advisory Council meeting held in Cape Town in April 2002 was the last one I chaired as Vice Chancellor. In fact, these meetings went a long way to restore confidence in the university and institute and to reassure the Chief Statistical Officers in the member states that Uganda was once again safe for their students and the institute's academic standards were as good if not better than as before.

Besides these national and regional initiatives undertaken by the university and the Ugandan Government, there were other combined efforts at Makerere involving the three states that made up the East African Community – Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. There was the East African Institute for Social Research, a research-only unit in the college, mandated to research into transboundary social issues and problems. When the first East African Community collapsed in 1977, it became Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR). The three states also took stock of the public and institutional libraries throughout the region and how they were managed. Their findings indicated that East Africa had too few professionally-trained librarians and the few that were there had trained either on the job or abroad at a substantial cost. To rectify the situation, they decided to start the East African School of Librarianship at Makerere. Originally, the school offered a certificate, undergraduate and postgraduate diplomas in Librarianship and admission was open to all East Africans. In the late 1980s, the school had sufficiently matured and started a Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) degree, followed by a Master of Science degree in Information Science. The University Council later changed the school's name to the East African School of Library and Information Science. In fact, the school is one of the surviving institutions set up during the first East African Community.

The transformation of the Department of Preventive Medicine into the Institute of Public Health was another attempt to make the university truly relevant to the needs of Uganda. One might be tempted to believe that the Government of the day was having too much say in the university's academic affairs, almost bordering on stifling academic freedom. To understand why the Government of Uganda took such a keen interest in what Makerere taught, one needs to understand Uganda's political landscape at that time. 1970 was the year of the "Nakivubo Pronouncement" and the "Move to the Left", which literally meant that Uganda had become a socialist state with a planned economy. The Government planned for the people and controlled the means of production. In this regard, the Government was the chief employer of Makerere's graduates. Therefore, it had to have a big say in the kind of graduate the university produced

and the curriculum the graduate had to follow. This was further emphasised by the Faud Visitation Committee report submitted to the Chancellor, Dr Apollo Milton Obote on June 23, 1970. The Committee recommended, among other things, that the new Makerere must be a Ugandan institution and the State must participate fully in its affairs. It had to be fully committed to the political, social and economic path Uganda had chosen to take. Academic freedom should not mean freedom from the Uganda Government control. It should not mean a creation of opportunity for foreign control of the staff, syllabus and research at Makerere.

When the dark days of the 1970s which lasted for almost a decade, dawned on the university, much of the development path Obote's Government had mapped out for the university was forgotten or abandoned altogether. Only the programmes that the university had already implemented survived. The only control Amin's Government relinquished was the top administration. Otherwise, there was hardly any significant new programme that came on stream during this period. However, Idi Amin kept urging the university to provide the nation with solutions to its problems, even when the conditions did not favour creative thinking. It was a point delivered home in the state of the nation speech which Amin delivered during the Independence Day celebrations of October 9, 1975 which was also the graduation day at Makerere. He told the staff, graduands and students of Makerere University that it was their duty as educated people to seek solutions to the nation's problems and implement Government policies. He even reminded the graduands that they had benefited from an expensive education that had prepared them to conduct original and relevant research as a way of helping the nation solve its problems. The period immediately following the overthrow of Idi Amin also saw very few new and innovative programmes. The university ran very much along the old traditional lines. Nevertheless, as the nation rid itself of the shackles of bad governance, the creative spirit returned to Makerere in leaps and bounds. One of the earliest innovative programmes of this period was the Master of Arts in Economic Policy and Planning in the former Department of Economics in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The Government had identified the need for economists with expertise and hands-on experience in planning and economic policy analysis. Makerere had not taught postgraduate courses and so could not be of much help to the Government. The Government had few options, and that was to hire expatriates to fill the gaps or send some of the few economists it had for specialised training abroad. For a while, it did both. Government economists went to the University of Bradford in the UK for training in these specialised fields. However, it was expensive and only few economists could go for the specialised training. Secondly, the training offered did not reflect the real Ugandan economic situation. President Museveni was strongly in favour of home-based training and, after

some discussions between the university and Government, the Department of Economics launched the MA programme. To kick-start and keep the programme running, the Uganda Government sought and obtained financial assistance and technical expertise in the form of professors from some development partners, namely the World Bank, the European Union and the UNDP. The university provided an old residential house on Pool Road for the programme. Besides the local university staff, other teaching staff came from Nigeria and the UK (University of East Anglia). Unfortunately, the Ministry of Public Service decided to stop the en masse sponsorship of graduate students at the university. The new Government policy required each Government department to identify skill gaps that required training at graduate level and decide how it would meet the cost of training from its own resources. At about the same time, donor funding also came to an end. Being the only taught graduate programme in the Department of Economics, there was fear that without new funding, it would be difficult to keep it running. To our pleasant surprise, this did not happen. Apparently, our fears were premature and unfounded. Many graduate students found a way of sponsoring themselves and the programme continued. Kibirige Mayanja, the university's long-serving Director of Planning and Development was one of the programme's pioneer graduates. This programme was the nucleus of the many good things that would happen later in the Department of Economics.

