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TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE AT KENYATTA UNIVERSITY*

M.B.K. Darkoh and K. Wambari

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Abstract

This paper is written by two members of staff, each of whom has served no less than ten years in Kenyatta University and who have carefully watched the institution wax and wane. There is no doubt that Kenyatta University, one of Kenya's largest public universities, is going through an unprecedented crisis at the moment. We have written this article in good faith and candour, believing in the need for, and importance of self-examination, if the problems facing this university are to be solved. The concept of self-examination, as we understand it, requires that we ask and attempt to critically answer some very fundamental questions. What is the prevailing state of affairs at Kenyatta University? What does Kenyatta University, as an institution of higher learning, aspire to become? How best can Kenyatta University become what it ought to be? To address these questions, we see a real need for openness, honesty, tolerance, and an atmosphere for dialogue and free sharing of information. We assume, as we must, that all of us in this workshop are passionately seeking after truth about Kenyatta University and that we are ready to do the utmost in our effort toward that end. We have written this paper in the belief that the same candid spirit of self-examination will prevail and guide us in the deliberation of this workshop on 'Towards Professional Excellence: Improving Teaching and Research Capabilities at Kenyatta University' so that our institution will become once more the proud and respected institution it used to be with respect to academic excellence. Creating a lively, hard-working and competent university campus that can be relied upon to produce the expertise, integrity and imaginative leadership needed to maintain, and hopefully, to accelerate the post-independence record of development in Kenya is a never-ending task that calls for a critical review of our everyday work, whether we are teachers, administrators or equally essential supporting staff. As in all walks of life, there is still plenty of room for improvement, especially in attitudes and behaviour, not least if we wish collectively to respond quickly and thoughtfully to the changing needs of the nation. We hope the Mombasa meeting will not be the only occasion for Kenyatta University to engage in critical self-examination. The price of excellence is eternal vigilance. Ariel's words to Gonzalo in Shakespeare's *Tempest* should serve as a clarion for us to be vigilant and not complacent. The words run as shown on the following page.

While you here do snoring lie
Open-eyed conspiracy
His time doth take;
If of life you keep a care,
Shake off slumber and beware;
Awake! Awake!'

Introduction: Objectives, Goals and Challenges

The purpose of a university is to find and advance knowledge, wisdom and understanding, by teaching and research and by the example and influence of its corporate life, and we would take our stand on this as being the purpose of all the institutions of higher education. The Kenyatta University Act (1985) is explicit on this when it says that the University shall be a 'body corporate', whose functions and objectives, among other things, shall be to 'participate in the discovery, transmission and preservation of knowledge and to stimulate cultural and intellectual life of the society' (paragraph 4d of the Kenyatta University Act, 1985).²

When the Parliament of Kenya on August 23, 1985 gave assent to the Kenyatta University Act, establishing Kenyatta University as the perpetual successor institution to the institution hitherto known as the Kenyatta University College, it must have been inspired by the latter's record of past performance. It must have gauged its potential for continuing quality performance and excellence, hence the move to reinforce and give the institution a fresh mandate as the country's third full-fledged university.

No doubt, since our early days, as University College up to the present, one of our cardinal aims has been to provide quality education and training. Our second essential goal has been the advancement of learning through research. Indeed, the importance of the two objectives can hardly be overstated. There is not only the direct contribution of new knowledge which may have far-reaching social effects but there is the indirect and no less important service of fostering the spirit of inquiry in the community as a whole, which is the surest safeguard against stagnation. It should be emphasized that this latter function implies the capacity for teaching and the capacity for communion with and inspiration of students. In other words, the research and the teaching aspects of university life are inseparably bound up and cannot be divorced and this principle should be the foundation of all development. The nation will be satisfied with nothing less than hard intellectual effort and excellence of performance in these two areas.

The Prevailing Situation and Operational Constraints

Seven years have passed since we gained autonomy, and it may be useful for us to pause for a moment and reminisce on our achievements, hopes and aspirations. We may like to begin by asking ourselves a few awkward questions on how effective we

have been as a university.

Can we say after these seven years, that all is well with us as an institution providing advanced university education and training, an institution finding and advancing knowledge, wisdom and understanding by teaching and research and by the example and influence of our corporate life? Can we say all is well with us as a centre of excellence? Are we putting in as much effort into our work, down to the last detail, day by day, whether as teachers or administrators as we would or should? Are we intellectually stretching ourselves and each other as much as our students and nation need and deserve? Are we able to offer adequate postgraduate education and training appropriate to the 1990s? Are we able to claim that we are admired for the quality of the training we give our students and for our service to the community? Are we able to undertake research that is relevant to community needs? Are we able to present technical reports, research findings, conference papers, creative writings and exhibitions that are well regarded by knowledgeable persons both here in Kenya and overseas? Are we able to say that Kenyatta University is held in high esteem by our national leaders and externally by staff of other institutions that have long-established reputations? Are we able to say that we have a good public-relations image?

Simply asking these questions may be a useful exercise in self-examination because we cannot give an unqualified 'Yes, we are able' to all these questions. It would be sheer pretence for anybody to assume that all is well with Kenyatta University. Kenyatta University is certainly in a crisis. Even a recent editorial in one of our popular dailies admits that 'all is not well at our once-proud varsity', and that 'there is a worrying trend of events at Kenyatta University, an institution once respected for academic excellence and efficiency' (*Daily Nation*, January 8, 1992:6). The 'tales of woe' highlighted in the press tell the story of a collapsing institution fighting for survival. And the newspaper editorial goes on to enumerate the horde of problems facing the University, from the perennial problems of overcrowding of undergraduate students, poor teaching facilities and inadequate research financing to broken promises to the non-teaching staff (*Daily Nation*, *Ibid*).

You may have noticed that the *Daily Nation* editorial cited above refers to the Kenyatta University as 'our once-proud varsity' and again as 'an institution once respected for academic excellence and efficiency'. What these euphemisms imply is that the public no longer regard this institution as a centre for academic excellence and efficiency, irrespective of what we who are in this institution think about our standards of performance and scholarship today. And editorial comments such as these from the national media should not be taken lightly.³

Let us not 'kid' ourselves, to use a street jargon. For too long, we have been foolhardy, like ostriches burying our heads in the sand, pretending that all is well with the quality of education and standard of scholarship in this University. We

have sat and watched (as if) in conspiratorial silence, the unavoidable deterioration of a potentially vibrant University into a glorified high school. It is time we do something as almost everything in this University today seems to be pointing to an agonising decline.

Our problems seem unprecedented in their scope and intensity: a sharp drop in governmental support that has already crippled graduate education and research; unpaid bills that have stalemated massive construction works and denied access to staff medical benefits; record numbers of students swarming dingy hostels, cafeterias and lecture rooms; a miniature library disabled by dwindling acquisitions, outdated journals and books; classrooms without chalks; offices without typewriting ribbons, paper and other forms of stationery; lecturers without office spaces; salaries that are paid too late; promises to non-teaching staff that go unfulfilled; exodus of lecturers and staff that is turning into a cascade; communication flow that hardly exists name it!

The problems that beset Kenyatta University or which impinge on Kenyatta University's efficiency and performance seem to fall into two (albeit overlapping) categories. First, there are those external to the institution like the severe cut-backs on government disbursements which affect not only Kenyatta University but other public universities such as Nairobi, Moi and Egerton as well.

Certainly, the root cause of the severe fiscal situation being experienced in the University stems from the cut-back on government subvention which has led the institution to run on a shoe-string budget. This, of course, has its repercussions on provision of facilities for research, maintenance and renewal of physical plants, staff recruitment and training, running of postgraduate programmes, etc.

If there is a decline in the quality of work being undertaken in the University, it should be blamed squarely on this. The reduced disbursements from the Treasury is causing what one of our science colleagues called total frustration at work. He tells us that as a science teacher, he finds himself half of the time chasing non-existent chemicals and equipment, simply because there is no money. Another colleague in the Arts Faculty tells us that in his department, duplicating paper and sometimes even typing paper are hard to come by these days. And when they are available, the secretaries complain that there is no typing ribbon. Consequently, he has stopped preparing handouts these days. We could go on to cite other examples to illustrate the frustrating conditions under which we have been forced to operate as a result of the shoe-string budget.

The depriving situation in Kenyatta only breeds frustration in most lecturers who see themselves producing obviously mediocre and ill-prepared students but can do nothing about it. Meanwhile, he is always told there is no money. Even his salary is never paid on time and nobody cares to explain why. Anyone who cannot countenance such a situation either ends up shouting himself hoarse to no avail or simply decides to go elsewhere where he can have job satisfaction.

The other set of problems affecting professional performance in this University can be described as internal, elements of which were touched on in the previous section describing the effects of the external constraints. When we talked about the lecturer who finds that his salary is never paid on time and is not told why, we were referring to an endemic problem of communication which exists in this University. Indeed, if there is one thing which undermines *esprit de corps* or what we call corporate life in this University, it is the problem of lack of communication. Senate members at senate meetings have frequently voiced concern about the persistence of this problem but it seems that very little is being done about it. Communication is the motive force which leads people to identify with an institution and feel proud to belong to it. It is the engine that fosters loyalty and commitment and motivates people to make sacrifices for the institutions where they work. Where information flow is stalled, apathy and dismay prevail, things fall apart and the centre cannot hold.

Communication also provides the outlet to show that one is concerned with other people's welfare. When the bubble burst after some 500 workers lost their patience waiting endlessly for house allowance arrears and downed their tools, it was because of lack of communication which smacked of lack of concern for the welfare of others. The President of Kenya and the Chancellor of this University has always warned Kenyans to be mindful of other people's welfare. How seriously has this principle been applied in Kenyatta University? It seems as if we are all too busy about our individual businesses that we do not care who suffers as a consequence of our action or inaction.

As a consequence of lack of communication and the apparent *laissez-faire* attitude of the administration over matters which affect staff and their general welfare, there appears to be little rapport between the administration and members of staff. Because of this, there is distrust between employer and employees. There is little rapprochement and morale appears to be low among staff, academic and non-academic. Staff members no longer feel comfortable identifying with the institution where they work. This identity crisis seems apparent even to the casual observer. It has been made worse by the bad publicity Kenyatta University continues to attract outside, especially in the media.

The academic staff and the administration seem to be working at cross purposes rather than as a cohesive team. Several of our colleagues whom we had the opportunity of interviewing concerning their perceptions of the administration feel that the administration does not really care for the needs of the academic staff. Instances were cited where the administration either seemed overtly indifferent or inexplicably unconcerned about staff welfare and security. They include issues dealing with payment of commuting allowances, the administration of pensions and superannuation schemes and medical benefits and NHIF schemes, all of which have

recently run into snags in this University. As a senior member of staff commented, 'When I have no pension to look forward to, when the University violates the terms of service and gets away with paying the new rates of commuting allowances, when my children and I are refused medical treatment at Nairobi and other hospitals because Kenyatta University has not settled its bills, what am I supposed to do? Who cares for my welfare in this University?'

There is also a strong feeling among staff members that the administration of Kenyatta University is not doing enough to enhance the image of the University. No doubt, the way employees perceive the University administration has a lot to do with the erosion of morale, confidence, loyalty and commitment which staff have for Kenyatta University.

Another problem that on the face of it looks like external but which from our viewpoint can be taken as internal for reasons which will later become obvious is the unprecedented exodus of lecturers and other staff of this University to other universities within the country.

In our view, Kenyatta University faces an imminent catastrophe in teaching and in its general performance as a university in the near future if the current rate at which it is losing its academic staff to other universities in the country is not halted immediately. Already, the difficulty the authorities encounter in recruiting expatriate lecturers has put a question mark on its long-standing reputation as a University of international standing.

Kenyatta University does not keep proper records or publish relevant statistics to enable us to buttress this portion of our discussions with relevant facts and figures. But from whatever angle one looks at it, the inescapable fact remains that the past few years have seen the University losing its lecturers and research fellows with disturbing frequency to other local universities. And the problem certainly deserves the attention of all and sundry.

The real question is why? It is well known that most people who leave and go to other universities in the country do not get paid any better than they are paid at Kenyatta University. The obvious and pertinent question that comes to the mind of any concerned person is why this unusual exodus to other universities in Kenya where the salaries and conditions of service are the same or no better? The causes are probably not far to seek. They most probably consist essentially of certain uncondusive attitudes and possibly distasteful working atmosphere that tend to push the lecturers away on the one hand and the perceivably more condusive and better working environment in the other local universities that pull the lecturers away on the other. For one thing, Kenyatta University has been noted to be slow in acting on such things as promotion to senior grades or implementing new terms of service. A case in point is the house allowance for non-teaching staff we have already mentioned. Most of us who have sat on Appointments Committees of this University

know how long it sometimes takes the authorities to process papers for candidates who have applied for promotion. We are also familiar with the perennial controversy in this University over who does the short-listing for promotion. Appointments to senior positions at Kenyatta University are burdened by bureaucratic procedures which only tend to frustrate heads of departments as well as applicants who genuinely would prefer continuing to work in this University.

Perhaps, another reason relates to the job satisfaction we have already alluded to. In an atmosphere where the logistics, the human relations, the physical infrastructure, the opportunity for research, the prompt payment of salaries and other statutory entitlements have become 'dysfunctional' to use the jargon of political science, it is not easy for a worker, however motivated, to have the necessary job satisfaction or self-realisation.

But undoubtedly more distressing and significant are the crippling consequences the crisis over lecturers and staff is having on academic life of this University. Many departments of the University are now a shadow of themselves and if something is not done, some may sooner than later be unable to function at all. One need only to look at the current staffing situations in departments such as Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Religious Studies, Philosophy, Sociology, Economics, Geography and Environmental Science to see how critical the situation is, especially in regard to postgraduate teaching and supervision. We now have departments at Kenyatta University where there are few people left to do the work of supervising postgraduate students. In quite a few cases, we now have departments where Ph.D. students are legally or illegally being co-opted to teach or supervise masters degree students!

The academic work aside, research activity in the University is fast grinding to a halt, in part because of lack of adequate funds. But even where money is available, it is also possible that research is fast registering the impact of the exodus of staff of this University. Nearly every teacher in the University departments is confronted by the problem of the adjustment of the claims on his or her time made by teaching, in the throes of the unprecedented student enrolments, the massive exodus and inadequate staffing in the departments.

Research is a most exacting occupation and in some, perhaps in many University departments, the research activities of members of staff are seriously hindered if not altogether inhibited by the demands of teaching and administrative duties. Both types of activities must be granted their due importance, and the adjustment of their conflicting demands upon the lecturer's time is a problem which confronts every lecturer in the University at the moment.

One unwholesome outcome of this conflict is the inevitable resort, on the part of several departments, to allowing graduate assistants and tutorial fellows to carry more than their fair share of teaching load. It is a fact that in this University, because of the staffing situation, several departments are relying increasingly on graduate

assistants and tutorial fellows to do most of the teaching, sometimes on their own (i.e. without supervision from senior staff).

The conflict arises out of conditions created partly by the exodus, and partly by the sheer size of class enrolments as well as the inability of the University to attract enough new staff and the squeeze put on hiring as a result of the current financial situation of the University. Yet it is essential that an equitable adjustment should be possible for each individual within the framework of the system so that both teaching and research activities can be granted their due importance in the lecturer's life in this University. It will be suicidal if the University abdicates its responsibility for maintaining the highest standards both in teaching and in research.

It is impossible to do full justice to all the disturbing things that are externally and internally plaguing performance and scholarship in this institution in a short introductory note such as this. However, it is essential to highlight these points which would certainly crop up in the discussions and deliberations of this workshop. We leave it to the members of this workshop to discuss these and other critical issues affecting the welfare and performance of this University fully.

The Way Out

The solutions to the myriad problems facing performance and scholarship at Kenyatta University are not going to come easy. At the base of all the problems is the financial crisis facing not only Kenyatta University but the nation as a whole. At the moment, Kenyatta University has, as the newspaper editorial put it, 'been living from hand-to-mouth with liabilities spiralling into millions', a situation arising from the mismatch between the dwindling subvention it receives from the government and the unprecedentedly large student intake and facilities that need to be provided.

To be sure, some of the problems crippling the University are of external origin to the institution. As pointed out earlier, the poor economic situation in the country is a factor that we cannot ignore. This, however, is only part of the problem that even though affecting all national institutions including public universities, is not as devastating in the other universities as it is at Kenyatta.

Might it be that the difference in the degree of damage is a manifestation of internal problems at Kenyatta that betray public relations efforts that might otherwise pay? Can we at Kenyatta University sit back with satisfaction that the public relations potential has been actualised to the maximum in making our realities known by authorities in the Ministry of Education and the Treasury? Have we as an institution, to the best of our ability, made it known that the facts of our circumstances are such that unless adequate funding is forthcoming, the inevitable consequence is the closure of this University? Is the Ministry of Education painfully aware that even now as we feverishly hang on, we are already destitute? Can we, ourselves, face it that professional excellence at Kenyatta University is no more than a dream as long

as prevailing financial circumstances persist? Could Kenyatta University Council be clearly aware of the plight and fail to see the need to come to the moment of truth? This moment must come sooner than later.

Adequate funding of this University, even if achievable today cannot of its own get us out of the morass in which we find ourselves. The experience of the last few years in managing existing programmes should give us cause to rethink seriously about further expansion of programmes we might have contemplated but not implemented. In the final analysis, Kenyatta University's image will depend on the quality or excellence of the programmes we have, not on their number. Where resources, human and material, are not available, we must have the courage to discourage the urge to expand. Faculties and departments whose viability is in question need not be started in the first place. When a department, for instance, is formally established but apart from a skeletal staff and students, no provisions are made for its existence in reality, the inevitable outcome is unnecessary frustration and consequent disillusionment on the part of both students and staff.

The main cause of the Kenyatta University's crisis of retrogression in teaching and research is uncontrolled expansion of student population, disregarding corresponding proportionate expansion in human and material resources to cater for additional numbers. To get out of the malaise in which we find ourselves, student admissions must be determined strictly by the ability of the University to provide internationally acceptable standards of education for them. The rationale in determining any new direction should be consolidation of what is presently manageable to desirable standards. Kenyatta University has already bitten more than she can chew!

To consolidate the existing programmes, Kenyatta University administration and academic staff obviously need to work together as a cohesive team. This can only happen when there is a free flow of communication and ungrudging sharing of information, both ways, to enable each side to appreciate the position of the other and its role in the corporate efforts to achieve our stated goals. This way, we can nurture an atmosphere of co-operation and mutual trust, minimising conflicts that arise from inevitable rumours once facts are not forthcoming. The polarization or the 'we/they' relationship that exists between the academic staff and the administration and the resultant mistrust and suspicion only serve to divide the University community to the detriment of all concerned. The fact is that both the administration and the academic staff share the same ominous problems of this University. These problems will not be solved unless there is concerted action.

We need to devise and put to good use an effective way of communication to restore trust and feeling, on the part of academic staff, that the administration really cares for the welfare of the community. We might perhaps learn from the University of Nairobi where, for instance, it was reported in the press (*The Standard*, January 16, 1992:3), that the vice-chancellor apologised to the staff 'for the delay in payment

of December salaries' and 'assured workers that action would be taken to avoid repetition of that kind of problem'. According to the same newspaper report, the University administration had informed the University community that 'after the review of the University's financial position, it has been decided that payment of leave travel allowance will now be switched to the month of February', (*The Standard, Ibid*). This kind of communication would be reassuring to Kenyatta University community, besides being pre-emptive of certain damaging rumours when it is absent.

Improved relationship between administration and staff has an important role in motivating the latter to excel in their work. In an atmosphere of mutual trust and concern, the administration will be motivated to ensure the security of lecturers and staff, something of utmost importance towards excellence.

There are clearly more important areas of work to which the University lecturer should devote his time and attention than such mundane things as when his next salary will be paid and the University should do everything possible to arrest the recurrence of salary delays as well as save lecturers and staff the embarrassing situation of (they and their families) being refused medical attention because the University is a bad debtor. The pension and superannuation schemes should be looked into expeditiously and the present anomalies rectified to reassure and guarantee staff their social security benefits. Worries such as these tend to undermine confidence and loyalty to one's place of work and their removal and prevention are likely to alleviate the psychological pressures and possibly the current staff depletion caused by the exodus to other places where allegedly congenial working environment prevails.

An important part of a lecturer's work should be to keep himself informed of what is being done in his subject by other scholars and scientists. This requires constant reading and also opportunities for meetings and discussions. Universities cannot be closed institutions in matters of research or teaching and there should be greater facilities for exchange of staff between Kenyatta University and other institutions of higher learning, both local (Africa) and overseas. Members of staff should be encouraged to attend conferences and discussions and the University should set aside money to assist members of staff and research students in this side of their work. Moreover, in some subjects, fieldwork abroad, study in foreign libraries and travel overseas are essential to the proper conduct of research, and should be recognised as such.

The University should have a Research Endowment Fund, administered by a fairly large committee, from which all departments and individuals could draw money. It is recommended that the University Council should urge that the Treasury grant should be large enough to cover all research expenditure. Research nowadays is often on much too large a scale for the considerable expenses to be saddled either

upon private means or upon the meagre vote that universities these days are allocated. The University authorities should also take the initiative to appeal to private organisations, business, industry, commerce and other donor agencies to contribute generously to the Research Endowment Fund.

Some portion of the research fund should be available to meet the expenses of publication. In some subjects, the results of research normally appear in journals of learned societies one of whose major functions is to publish the original work of their members. But even in these subjects, the funds available are frequently inadequate and in others, publication is only possible at the expense of the research worker himself. This may unduly delay or even prohibit the presentation to the learned world of valuable original studies.

There is already a project in the pipeline to organise a national *harambee* and find other means of generating funds to alleviate the pressure created by the reduction in government subvention. Those projects should be given the priority and support they deserve. Kenyatta University should act quickly lest other universities take the wings out of our sails.

Without an all-round development of library facilities, including books, periodicals, buildings and staff, research and teaching will remain seriously hampered. Our library is of recent origin. It is too small and lacks adequate stock of books and documents. In particular, the scientific and learned journals and periodicals appearing in foreign countries are poorly represented in several subject areas in our library shelves. Our acquisitions are also not up to date.

A radical increase in library grants including the early completion of the extension work currently being done to the library building is therefore vital. Even if the present grants were doubled, many of the present defects would continue to exist; they could only be eliminated by a co-ordinated policy of book purchase worked out by the subject departments and the library unit jointly. A concerted plan is particularly needed to provide stocks of rarer and more specialised periodicals.

With the increasing role being played by tutorial fellows and other younger inexperienced lecturers in teaching in Kenyatta University, serious doubts have been cast on the competence, standards and effectiveness of our teaching. Even with more experienced and senior members, misgivings have occasionally been expressed by students regarding their teaching effectiveness. Not all such comment is balderdash or uninformed prejudice. It is most unfortunate that there is no general training available for university teachers. Most damnable of all, Kenyatta University, as a matter of policy, does not have any effective feedback machinery for deciding whether lecturers are doing their job well or not.

Sometime ago, the Faculty of Arts appointed a committee to look into the teaching situation and propose a feedback mechanism for monitoring and evaluating teaching effectiveness in the faculty. One of the writers of this paper was the chairman of that committee and the other was the Dean of the Faculty. In our proposal, we suggested

a method whereby the lecturer would, during the middle and end of the semester, administer to his students a checklist of questionnaires addressing various aspects of his teaching performance. The technique is widely employed in the United States of America.

While a few forward-looking lecturers supported the 'Staff Evaluation by Students' proposal, many objected. The objections fall into the following categories:

- i) That student opinion is worthless.
- ii) That disgruntled and weaker students see such assessments as outlets to settle scores with lecturers.
- iii) The attributes which students look for in lecturers vary widely from group to group and from time to time.
- iv) That the characteristics exhibited by any one lecturer vary with time and in his interactions with student groups.
- v) That such assessments can polarise staff-student relationship and give the wrong impression of a lecturer's true competence.

The assessment of a lecturer's performance by students has no doubt some disadvantages and may require a degree of boldness to carry out. It can, however, yield the subject a great deal of valuable information and is certainly better than the alternatives of *laissez-faire* or not doing anything at all about feedback. We, therefore, recommend that Kenyatta University, as a matter of policy, should make it mandatory for lecturers and all categories of staff to be periodically assessed by their students for the purposes of feedback. A committee of senate should be appointed to look into the issue and devise a suitable mechanism for staff monitoring and assessment. We dare also suggest that a similar mechanism be devised to monitor behaviour and performance by members of the administration, also for purposes of feedback.

Until the current unprecedented student enrolments, the tutorial system used to operate effectively in Kenyatta University. This system made it possible for free exchange of ideas, dialogue and meeting of minds between lecturers and students. Today, however, with the large number of students and the constraints of staffing, it has become impossible to operate the tutorial system effectively. Yet because of the 8-4-4 intake where we are dealing with younger minds, the need for tutorials is even more critical. It is our strong belief that when admissions are guided by the ability of the University to cater for effective teaching, this will be one of the priority areas to be addressed.

We cannot overstate the need for a vigorous staff development policy for this University. This paper is not the proper forum to address the whole issue. Perhaps

it needs a separate paper. However, we think Kenyatta University should have flexible policies and guidelines regarding staffing, training, promotion and retention. We recommend that a senate committee be appointed to look into this important issue, with the view of reviewing and making existing policies and guidelines adaptable to changing circumstances in this University.

In our view, university teaching should involve not only imparting knowledge but more so, the ability to handle knowledge at an advanced level. This can only be possible through advanced training involving additional training at a more theoretical and practical level beyond the first degree, as well as further training in the capacity to do research, culminating in the acquisition of the doctorate degree.

Our current crop of tutorial fellows, graduate assistants and even lecturers need to be assisted to get openings into accredited institutions locally (in Africa) and overseas to acquire the necessary skills and advanced professional training. Kenyatta University should be more vigorous in finding scholarships and training opportunities and outlets for tutorial fellows, graduate assistants and lecturers. At present, most of the initiative is expected to come from the particular tutorial fellow or graduate assistant concerned, and the University does little to facilitate the acquisition of such training opportunities despite the fact that it at the same time requires that these staff members show evidence of progress towards Ph.D. work before they get promoted or have their contract renewed. We think the advanced training of tutorial fellows and graduate assistants should be one of the responsibilities of the University. The vitality of an educational institution at all levels depends mainly on its teachers and the quality of training they have had. There is a moral responsibility on the University to take a more active interest in the training of its tutorial fellows and graduate assistants.

With the establishment of more than one public university in Kenya, competition for the limited government funds involves hard bargaining. In this bargaining, universities have only one thing to sell, and that is their excellence. The only sure bulwark that Kenyatta University has is the excellence of its standards. Provided these standards are maintained, it is our belief that the ball is at our feet and we can state our terms. We also believe that both extrinsic and intrinsic staff interests have a significant bearing on the concept of excellence that we would want to see upheld in our universities in Kenya.

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Notes

1. For the source of this quotation see 'The Tempest' in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1975, p. 10.
2. For this citation see the Kenyatta University Act, *Kenyatta University Calendar*, 1988/1989, p. 407.
3. Kenyatta University has been very much in the news media. All the local dailies in the last few years have been highlighting the innumerable problems facing the University. It is the first time, however, that these problems have been given editorial coverage by a daily (*The Nation*), an indication of the seriousness of the situation. Some of the most recent media discussions of Kenyatta University include: Letter to the Editor, 'The Mess at Kenyatta University' by Frustrated Lecturer, *Daily Nation*, October 24, 1991, p. 7, 'Cash Crisis on the Campus', a feature article - Lifestyle 8 and 9, *Sunday Nation*, December 15, 1991 and 'University Education Needs to be Re-assessed', comment, *Sunday Standard*, November 17, 1991, p. 8.

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- Daily Nation*, 'All is Not Well at Our Once-Proud Varsity', (Editorial), Wednesday January 8, p. 6.
The Standard, 'Varsity Officer Sent Home', January 16, 1992.