

LETTER OF THE DAY

Change management model at Makerere

Makerere university needs a shift in thinking to align with the dynamics of how 21st Century organisations are governed and run. That shift should start with re-thinking the credentials of the head of the university. The qualification for a vice chancellor require that a candidate holds PhD/academic doctorate or master's degree in clinical disciplines at the rank of associate professor with academic, administrative and financial competencies. These attributes are silent on management, strategy capabilities. Makerere and other universities should shift the requirements away from the academics that require PhDs, professors to hiring people with management and strong corporate leadership experience to run the university as a business enterprise. The university should be run by a chief executive with solid management experience responsible for strategy with clear KPIs on generating revenue, improving processes, controls and containing wastage. The academia can be run by a professor probable a vice chancellor who reports to the CEO and is charged with ensuring quality of teaching, research, and publications. The CEO position should



be competitive, based on leadership and a track record of turning around corporations and not selected through a voting exercise like it's done with the selection of the vice chancellor.

The governance of the university must also change and should include people with solid leadership experience in corporate/business organisations and academia to provide both strategic oversight on how the university is run as a business enterprise and ensure the pedagogy adheres to quality standards and remains consistent with a first class university.

This arrangement would not be

unique to Makerere. Organisations in other countries have adopted similar approaches. A classic example is the Nairobi Hospital. Nairobi Hospital is the best managed hospitals in East Africa. The head of this hospital is not a medical doctor, but an MBA graduate with a degree in hotel management and solid experience in running corporate organisations. The doctors have been relegated to do what they do best – focus on consultations and provision of quality health care, as the CEO works to generate revenue for the hospital and remunerate staff better.

You cannot solve a complex problem with the same thinking that created it. The management models we are using to run our universities and other public institutions have been over taken by time and can no longer hold in a fast-paced world. Fixing the symptom without getting to the root cause of the problem only postpones the problem that will be difficult to address in the very near future. You want to fix Makerere problems, fix management. Otherwise, look out for the next strike and another one as the ping-pong continues.

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