
STRIKES

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY'S CONSTANT TROUBLES AND STRIKES

MURUHURA INNOCENT
BscCSC
216013512
16/U/7611/PS
FEBRUARY 8,2018

Contents

1 Makerere university's constant troubles and strikes	1
2 References	2

1 Makerere university's constant troubles and strikes

It is now clear that Makerere University that was closed for nearly two months after a staff strike, reopened on Monday 2nd January 2017. This is not the first time the public university, the oldest and largest institution of higher learning in Uganda is closed after a strike.

The recent strikes and closures lead to questions as to what ails Makerere and whether it is possible that the institution could be closed again after yet another strike because the underlying issues have not been comprehensively addressed.

Every month Makerere University spends about Shs6.1 billion shillings just on salaries and allowances. This means every year, the university uses about 80 billion shillings on staff salaries alone. This accounts for nearly 75 percent of the universities total budget.

And when the university fails to pay, a chain of strikes set off. The academic staff strike over pay, students strike because they are not being taught and even non-academic staff strike because they feel that their academics counterparts are favoured.

And yet beyond the friction, there are underlying issues afflicting the 96-year old university, Ugandas oldest institution of higher learning.

Former Executive Director of the Uganda National Council for Higher Education, Prof. Abdul Kasozi, who is now a Research Associate at Makerere university, says the institution's leadership structure, like that in other public universities is built on an old model that has outlived its usefulness. Universities in Uganda are governed by the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001. But Prof. Venansius Baryamureeba once Makerere Vice-Chancellor says this law has contributed to Makerere's problems. He says this law is weak and does not give university councils, the highest governing bodies the teeth to bite. At least 23 of the 22 Makerere Council members are staff members. The former Vice Chancellor says this is the case of a monkey deciding whether the forest should burn. The former Makerere Computer Science don says the Makerere University Academic Staff Association and the association of non-teaching staff wield a lot of power and hold the administrators at ransom. Analysts also point to alleged cliques and external influence on university administrators which derails the institution.

Ramathan Goobi, a lecturer at the Makerere university business school, says there are cliques within the university who have a sense of entitlement and believe they ought to have a say in who gets to head the institution.

Makerere University is largely funded by government and there have been calls to have the state take over the entire wage bill. Prof. Kasozi says this must change. He says that the money for the university must not be linked directly to the treasury and the university ought to have more autonomy in budgeting for internally generated funds.

According to Article 31 Clause (2) of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, the Vice Chancellor shall be appointed by the Chancellor on the recommendation of the University Council from among three candidates recommended by the Senate. Prof. Baryamureeba wanted this changed.

Interestingly, all the problems that are highlighted as the causes of the university's troubles are reflected in numerous reports like the McGregor report of 2007, the Mbaguta report and the 2011 Prof. Francis Omaswa report on strikes.

President Yoweri Museveni appointed a committee to study the issues ailing Makerere. The committee chaired by former Makerere biochemistry don and deputy chairman of the National Planning Authority Dr. Abel Rwendeire was expected to present its report by February 2017. But

questions linger to whether the Rwendeire report does not gather dust on some government shelves like other previous reports

2 How to solve strikes in public universities

The current staff strike and student commotions at Makerere University are a tip of an iceberg. Staff and student activism cannot be resolved by regighting them with Police or other security forces. Fundamental causes of these strikes and the current governance problems must be studied, analyzed and addressed to resolve current problems in our university system.

Changes of vice chancellors will not resolve the problems. Neither will giving more funds to staff nor students. There are structural problems that must be studied to resolve current disquiet in our institutions of higher learning. Factors causing commotion at Makerere are present in all public, and some private universities.

Currently, Ugandan universities have massive problems making it difficult for them to fulfill their obligations to society. A few of their staff engage in innovative studies, produce impressive publications or register acclaimed patents. Less than 15 percent of our university academic staff hold PhDs or terminal degrees, the apparently lowest qualification for university teaching and knowledge production. My humble suggestion is that a thorough study of the problems of our universities be done, problems identified, a type of university Uganda needs defined and a national dialogue on this issue conducted.

Firefighting, band aid treatment or changing of individuals will not resolve issues. My suggestion is not novel for such studies have been done of our education system. Since the early colonial period, Uganda has constantly posed and rethought how it educates its young. The history of education indicates that the country has posed, on average every twenty years to re-examine its education system.

Makerere and other public universities in Uganda have one major challenge from which most of their problems flow as subsidiary streams. That problem is underfunding. The underfunding is exacerbated by a second problem, which is the failure of university leaders to appropriately manage neo-liberal policies impacting on higher education financing. Both problems dovetailed and feed into each other and are strengthened by a legal framework that has not been amended to match changing local and global forces impacting on higher education creation, storage and delivery.

Makerere's major financial challenge since the early 1980s has been the management of the shift from overdependence on state funding to the market as the larger provider of its funding. The laws that govern the institutions management of finances were not changed to match the changed financial model when the institution adopted neo-liberal practices between 1980 and 2007.

In other words, Makerere operates within the neo-liberal constraints in the way it raises about half of its budget without changing the original legal instrument when the state was its only or major financier. Makerere began to operate, and still operates, within the neo-liberal constraints.

3 References

<http://www.ntv.co.ug/news/local/28/dec/2016/what-are-causes-makerere-universitys-constant-troubles-1532sthash.zfd5QNmg.dpbs>