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Politics of Participatory Decision-Making

The case of Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi

Andiwo T. Obondo\*

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### **Introduction**

The University of Nairobi was borne from the Royal Technical College established in 1956. By 1961, the Royal Technical College had evolved into a University College like that of Makerere and Dar-es-Salaam, giving London University degrees. In 1964, it became a college for the University of East Africa. The University of East Africa was disbanded in 1970 and the relatively autonomous University of Nairobi was set up with Kenyatta University College as its constituent campus. Kenyatta University College became a third University on 1985 after Moi University was established as the second state University in 1984. The former Egerton College, which was also a constituent college of the University of Nairobi, became a fourth University in 1987. Jomo Kenyatta College of Agriculture and Technology, hitherto a constituent college of Kenyatta University, became autonomous through a presidential decree, which was then formalised into an Act of Parliament.

The Kenyan public universities have been shaped by complex historical influences that have been at play for decades in a country conspicuous for its ethnic, political and religious diversity. With roots going back to the 1950's, Kenyan universities have evolved into some of the most classic institutions of higher education in East and Central Africa. However, their management organs and structures were not original. These were adopted from Makerere University when the University of Nairobi gained its full-fledged university status in 1970 (Ochola & Wanjala, 1989).

The University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University have encountered serious management crises over the last decade more so than in any other period in their history. The crises have manifested themselves in several ways such as constant students' unrest, a thoroughly de-motivated, disenchanted and demoralised staff, alongside financial cutbacks. These have led to an inability to balance their budgets (Sifuna, 1997).

### **Background to the study**

Proponents of participatory management of college affairs view cases of disruptions of academic programmes as a direct result of the failure by university authorities to involve students in decision-making. They conclude that the continuous student unrest in local universities is often a reflection of demands for their involvement in college administration (Okello, 1998).

If students are involved in making decisions about salient issues concerning their lives, they are likely to identify with the outcomes of such processes and colleges with institutionalised participation of students in their management experience lesser student-related administrative problems (Okello, 1998). When a team approach to administration is used, students will feel more positive towards college leaders and are likely to be committed to college goals and objectives. Okello calls for an overhaul of the power structures with established lines of communication between administrators and students. A radical shift is required from a situation where students are passive partakers of policy decisions to one in which they are active participants in both the learning and administration processes. Advocates of behavioural

foundations of open decision models contend that premises for group decisions are powerful means of influencing individuals towards organisational goals.

The multiple choice model gives a highly realistic simulation of human problem-solving and indicates that each successive decision is an attempt to improve the outcome in light of new information gained through consultations at every stage of the decision-making process. When a decision is taken with the general acceptance of all concerned, it is easier to carry out such decisions.

On the other hand, the human relations' school asserts that workplace or college behaviour is determined mainly by the organisational setting in which it occurs. It lays emphasis on leadership styles, interpersonal and organisational communications, student or employee satisfaction, group norms and cohesion. People-participation of in decisions that affect their working lives is essential for effective management. Such participation can be through negotiating committees, representation in college boards, suggestion schemes, autonomous problem-solving groups and joint consultation (Bennett, 1997).

The human relationists say that involvement of students in management decisions, improves the quality of life, increases efficiency in service delivery, enhances motivation, reduces strife and develops social cohesion. Such a process further underwrites the principles of fair treatment and acts as a counterbalance to the concentration of power in the hands of a few college executives. Involving students in all sensitive matters helps to allay the fear of the unknown, which usually causes conflicts.

Another approach to participatory policy formation is joint consultation in which management retains control over the decision-making process, but seeks to utilise the energy and initiative of the students' body by involving it in decision-making activities. In this case, the administration informs students of its plans and opinions on various issues and invites comments from them. The advantage of joint consultation is that students are given the opportunity to draw management's attention to their concerns, including grievances, in a forum that is not susceptible to confrontation. Secondly, management-student communication is generally improved and this helps in seeing issues from each other's point of view and in understanding their respective problems or limitations.

A joint consultation system requires a genuine willingness to listen sympathetically to divergent views, to explain and justify proposals and to engage in genuine discussions. All levels and categories of students and other major sectors within the university should be represented. Management must avail information to students, to enable them to form considered opinions on relevant issues. It should further justify its actions by explaining their implications. Students frequently complain that the authorities only engage in consultations during periods of crisis, but are reluctant to consult them when the University is experiencing success. This could be for fear of provoking demands for adjustments of programmes, better conditions or improved welfare (Ochwada, 1998).

The chief proponents of this school of thought, Kurt Lewin and Abraham Maslow, argued that decisions which emanate from stakeholders and which are backed by group agreement are more effective than those imposed by the leadership. People must be actively involved in decision-making if they are to be fulfilled and effective in following up the decisions made (Schwart, 1984). McGregor's X and Y theory was equally influential in the early stages of anti-bureaucracies (the human-relations trend in management studies and theories that explored means of developing workers' potential through participatory management techniques). He advocated a

people oriented style and described his models in terms of governing variables, action strategies, personal initiative, and responsibility of outcomes and leadership effectiveness. Mortimer and McConnel (1978), on the other hand, emphasised the process as the most promising route to improving governance. They stated that the sharing of formal authority, the scope and form of internal participation in governance and the horizontal distribution of authority should be characterised by full and open consultation with an emphasis on joint endeavours (Powers, 1984).

It seems that the university has not alienated itself from doctrines of centralised power to notions of devolution, separation and broadened participation. This is despite the fact that in society at large, power is leaking out of the national government to local communities who are determined to exercise more jurisdiction over their own destinies. The formulation of public policy increasingly flows towards organised citizens' groups and the desire to participate is spreading through "collective leadership" (Communist definition). The Japanese call this "consensus" and the Americans call it "committee work".

Consultation assumes that people operate in organised groups to make decisions that guide the course of their institutions. Understanding the social systems in which processes occur is crucial as consultative procedures attempt to modify the culture within a university community to exercise the self-discipline and objectivity required to participate in consultation (Cohen & March, 1974). Even though decisions by management boards are always through consensus, mechanisms to enhance proper consultations with various student constituencies of the university community have not been evolved. The number of participating students is too low to adequately represent the numbers in the student body. Consultative decision-making evokes a sense of partnership, community participation and working together for the common good (Maritim, 1996).

C.B. Mackay (1984), in his report of the Presidential Working Party on the Second University, argues that the administrative system of a university at all levels must be sufficiently decentralised. This will enable those for whom it is intended not only to have a participatory role, but also to feel that they participate in their own administration. It is therefore essential to design a system of administration that ensures that decisions affecting important segments of the university are made at the appropriate levels. If and when managerial and administrative responsibilities are shared with more stakeholders, university heads will find themselves in an environment where one of their primary functions is to serve as mediators among various interest groups (Republic of Kenya, 1981). If members of the university community are involved in decision-making, their individual, group and institutional needs and those of broader ranges of constituencies are likely to be met by outcomes. In consultative decision-making, more people are involved in defining the problem, weighing alternative courses of action, determining the implications of proposed solutions and in structuring the response to be implemented (Sherman, 1993). Public universities, despite the vital role they play in providing research, expertise, training, human resource development and in the formation of future leaders, have not been adequately targeted in the on-going democratic transition.

### **Statement of the problem**

Facilitation of greater involvement of students in management of college affairs has emerged as a serious administrative and leadership problem. The general absence of a culture of freedom and regular dialogue in our universities is manifested in rising cases of unrest (Okello, 1998). University problems increase when mutual communication fails between the administration and students.

The recurrent student unrest in the two universities studied here is often a reflection of demands for their involvement in college administration. Rejectionist tendencies of students and their negative reactions to policy statements from the university authorities and/or decisions by the student leaders indicate that students are not adequately involved in processing of decisions. This means that even student leaders hardly consult their colleagues before or after meetings of policy formation organs. The major problem therefore is that proper consultation mechanisms between the students themselves and between students and college authorities on the other hand are non-existent. This is despite having university-wide student organisations, Kenyatta University Students Association (KUSA) and Student Organisation of Nairobi University (SONU), together with college-based professional and welfare associations.

These may be a result of non-involvement of students in decision-making, a major problem that this study seeks to address. In cases where there are clear provisions for student representation in management organs, we must investigate why they are reluctant to participate.

### **Objectives, questions and assumptions**

The purpose of this study was to help establish the relationship between the existing decision-making procedures, policy formulation processes and the recurrent unrest in the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University. The study was to further provide suggestions on the best consultation mechanisms through which participation of all students could be enhanced to improve productivity. It also examined the extent to which students are involved in decision-making. The study sought to address itself to the following specific objectives:

1. To establish the nature and extent of student involvement in policy formulation in higher education.
2. To determine to what extent the two universities have been able to respond to and accommodate demands for stakeholders' involvement in its management.
3. To establish whether the recurrent unrest in the two universities have been influenced by the existing decision-making procedures and processes.
4. To identify alternative approaches appropriate in academic administration.

This study sought to answer the following broad questions:

1. Have power and responsibility been delegated and devolved effectively to all stakeholders in the university?
2. To what extent have students been involved in processing of decisions?
3. Do the present managerial arrangements (decision-making process and consultation mechanisms) meet the needs of students?
4. Is there any direct relationship or link between the existing decision-making structures and consultation procedures and the recurrent unrest in the universities?

The following assumptions were made during the study:

1. The recurrent riots and unrest result from the existing managerial arrangements, which do not allow for adequate involvement and representation of students in decision-making.
2. Despite provision for representation, students are not always eager or enthusiastic to take part in decision-making.
3. Students are usually more willing to abide by decisions they help formulate rather than decisions imposed on them.
4. When students are involved in policy formulation and general college affairs, they are more willing to commit themselves to the university and its goals.

### **Review of related literature**

#### **Participatory governance in academic administration**

Participatory management in educational institutions contributes to improved student achievement, increased efficiency in use of both human and material resources as well as enhanced community engagement (Powers, 1984). Okwahinga (1977) conducted a study in the operations and functions of Senate, Council and faculty boards of Makerere University. In his study, he tried to assess the role of students and staff in decision-making at various levels of the university, but like most preceding studies, this work did not establish the extent, relevance and effectiveness of such participation in the existing decision-making structures.

Coombe (1991) attempted to answer the all-important question "How do the many academic groups articulate their interests?" He stated that the fundamental task of campus government is to discern broad patterns of legitimate power and try to root authority in the dominant locations of interest groups. He concluded that how an academic system distributes and legitimises power is crucial for its stability and progress. He identified levels of campus authority as the department (lowest major operating unit), the faculty/institute or school, the individual college, and the multi-campus academic administration (multi-locational and federative universities).

Emphasis should be on the need for autonomy in universities, while respecting the right of the community at large to make the universities responsive to the needs and requirements of the country. The concept of greater student and staff participation is to help make university education richer, more significant and meaningful. It would be advisable for the university system itself to devise an adequate machinery to deal with grievances of students, teachers, subordinate staff and administrators and this machinery should be so devised that all persons concerned would have confidence in its impartiality and independence (Mehendiratta, 1984). The administrative and academic wings of the university must work in a spirit of co-operation, understanding. Human touch must be present in the university campus, in the classrooms, co-curricular activities, and even purely administrative matters. Lines of communication between different sections of the university community must always remain open.

The university should avoid complexity in the decision-making processes, over-centralisation, lack of active and widespread participation by the academic staff, students, support team and inadequate channels of communication. Most of these lie outside the scope of legislation on governance of universities. This is because it depends on the attitudes and habits of the people involved and on the pressure groups present at each institution. Within francophone Africa, universities are characterised by a more centralised governance. The University Council draws its membership from staff without any outside representation although deans and departmental heads are generally elected and possess certain decentralised responsibilities.

The administrative model in Kenyan universities is strongly hierarchical and tends to be inflexible in the face of changing circumstances. As a result it is generally unresponsive to student and staff concerns (Lumumba, 1996). University senates, faculty boards and committee structures generally offer real opportunities for staff and student participation in academic affairs, although the committee process can contribute to management inefficiency by delaying decision-making. Nonetheless, as African universities expand, some decentralisation of responsibilities to the level of faculty deans, departmental heads and other sectoral units may be worth considering. Ensuring student representation in the various organs of university governance, briefing students at critical junctures and regularly disseminating vital information through the media to the public in general will help reduce tensions and enhance mutual understanding (Saint, 1995).

Among those actors who should be involved in efforts to stabilise and revitalise African universities, students are the most vulnerable and least empowered group. However, it is students who have the potential to materially advance the renewal process. Student associations represent

an important untapped resource in university efforts to confront the current crisis. Instead of viewing them as opposition groups, university leaders must regard them as potential partners in common efforts to improve university conditions. Repression of mechanisms for fostering student leadership will probably slow the process of national capacity-building by alienating the country's next generation of political leadership and transferring to them inappropriate models of conflict resolution (Saint, 1995).

The vice-chancellor of a Nigerian university eloquently argues the critical role of university leadership in regular consultation thus; "... *a vice chancellor who feels too busy to interact with his staff and students even occasionally is less likely to succeed than one who takes time off to meet staff/ students and randomly accepts their invitations. Such moments provide opportunities for exchange of ideas and letting out steam which could otherwise have accumulated to facilitate a crisis (...)* The more a vice-chancellor is able to do this, the more successful he is in the politics of university administration" (Alele-Williams, 1988).

Universities are expected to protect national development efforts by contributing new understanding and fresh perspectives to support economic and technological advancement. For universities to fulfil this role, they will have to create learning environments that encourage creativity, constructive dialogue, and constant adaptation to rapidly changing scientific and societal circumstances. This requires the transformation of prevailing patterns of paternalistic governance into structures of participation and accountable leadership. The former pattern involves staff and students as equal and responsible partners. The path to this goal lies in transparency and information flow, representative participation, incentives and rewards for positive initiative and sufficient delegation of responsibility with appropriate accountability to enable a follow up on their ideas. To the extent that these practices can be put in place, the result will be an intellectually vibrant institution.

### **Challenges and problems of decision-making**

In violation of laid down university statutes, administrators establish a "top-down" model of decision-making (Sifuna, 1997). This study on governance of Kenyan public universities concluded that lack of participatory administrative culture in universities has led to concentration of decision-making in the office of the vice-chancellor. Other problems identified during this study include management by withholding and controlling information from others and the "chief's syndrome" in which all instructions must come from the vice-chancellor and there is very little consultation in the process.

The tendency for vice-chancellors to monopolise all aspects of decision-making has now been perfected in the creation of vice-chancellors management boards, whose powers are too wide and constantly erode those of the senate (Sifuna, 1997). The erosion of senate powers has largely to do with its composition. The majority of senate members are departmental heads and institute directors who are appointees of the vice-chancellor. The working of the internal university structure is a real obstacle to academic freedom. Although universities teach about democracy and are quite vocal about the need for popular participation in decision-making, universities' administrative structures and key policy-making bodies are most undemocratic. Sifuna (1997) concludes that faculty boards in public universities hardly ever meet and when they do, they are preoccupied with course programmes and examinations. At the departmental level, although there was evidence of regular staff meetings following a similar agenda, student representation was non-existent.

Institutions of departmental heads and institute directors suppress participatory decision-making at departmental level and tend to ignore the views of staff and students if they are seen to conflict

with those of the administration. In some departments and faculties, meetings are often called specifically to deal with teaching schedules when semesters are about to start and around exam time. Deans and departmental heads determine the agenda of such meetings. 64.3% of staff at the departmental level and 69.8% at the faculty level receive communication about key issues through circulars. On the other hand, government intervention in university education has not been limited to growth and expansion. The Chancellor appoints and dismisses vice-chancellors along with the majority of Council members.

Government intervention has also tended to inhibit democratisation of decision-making in universities since most university administrators choose to run universities with their own appointees who are answerable to them. Maritim (1996) recommends a rethinking and eventual overhaul of internal governing structures, a thorough review of university acts and statutes to create more democratic decision-making processes and introduction of incentives to encourage students and staff to participate in decision-making.

A sub-regional workshop on institutional management in higher education held in Accra, Ghana in 1995 pointed out that the urgency of adopting a more managerial cost-effective approach to running universities is resisted by academics in developing countries. In view of this, the workshop observed that it should be apparent to all staff and students that if they are not to lose out in the competitive allocation of resources, they have to participate in overall and departmental management. Participants identified problems hindering decentralisation and departmental management as centralised bureaucracy, state interest in university governance, distrust of local-level participation, lack of management know-how and unwillingness to assume management responsibilities by stakeholders (Sanyal *et al*, 1995).

Another study conducted by Carnegie Foundation (1983) gave insight into principles of behaviour; attitudes and components of consultation that will help administrators initiate or improve consultative decision-making. The report observes that only experience in conducting consultative processes can teach administrators what works best at their particular institutions with their unique individuals, issues, governing bodies and traditions.

### **Issues in policy formation and politics of decision-making**

Universities and colleges as entities must strive to reflect the teaching, research and service commitments of all dominant groups within them. There has been a growing tendency for sections of the university community to question their respective administrations on matters ranging from corruption in high offices to the limitation of democratic decision-making (Achola *et al*, 1989). Within the confines of the universities, academic staff, students and non-academics are often in disagreement with the university administration. Such conflicts are always over living allowances, terms and conditions of service, their limited representation in university governing bodies and their perception of university authority as defender of state-interests as opposed to the interests of the university (Kilemi, 1992).

As a result of the overbearing presence of the presidency in management of universities, including key appointments, the experience of most anglophone universities is that key policy matters are in the hands of the government while academics only determine academic policies. To confirm this assertion, Kwame Nkrumah—Ghana's first head of state—on several occasions castigated the University of Ghana for not initiating reforms 'consistent' with the country's needs and warned that "*if reforms do not come from within, we intend to impose them from without and no resort to*

*the cry for academic freedom is going to restrain us from seeing that our university is a healthy institution devoted to Ghanaian interests"* (Cited by Arbby, 1964).

Nkrumah, Nyerere and other pioneer African leaders called on the African universities to be fully committed to active participation in the social transformation, economic modernisation and the training and upgrading of the total human resources of the continent. Omari (1991) and Kilemi (1992) agree that the key components of good governance within universities include strengthening of internal structures and the creation of new ones where necessary. Others include promotion of dialogue at both the formal and informal levels between the various groups within universities, and encouraging greater flow of information between staff/students and the administration. University authorities should be more accountable to their members and the wider public.

Writing on the *Zambian experience*, G.F. Lungu (1988) notes that "*many senior administrators feel insecure because their tenure depends on government's goodwill.*" In an attempt to project the image of effective managers and to fulfil the expectations of government, senior administrators often resort to high-handedness and ignores the sentiments and needs of the university. Lungu further observes that failure by the university authority to be responsive to staff and students' interests can result in the latter losing confidence in the university administration. A balance of service between the university community, the wider public and government can be achieved if those appointed to head universities are acceptable to their respective constituencies. This can probably be partly achieved if appointments are made through nomination processes that take into account the views of staff and students as in some Nigerian universities. Senates and councils make administrative appointments from academicians within the university after wider consultation with members of the university and key partners in the private and public sectors.

The other source of conflict between the university authority and various interest groups relates to the inequality of representation in existing administrative structures. This has emerged as a key issue in the policy reform debates of the 1990s (Sherman, 1993). The typical administrative structures of universities in anglophone Africa consist of the Council, which is the major policy-making body. This body mainly consists of government nominees and this dominance is a major cause of discontent among students and academics. Private sector institutions and the business community should also nominate their own representatives. This will make the Council more autonomous and allow it to make and implement its own decisions or policies devoid of political interventions (Kilemi, 1996). The other organ is the Senate, which is the chief authority over all academic matters. It is composed almost entirely of university representatives, mainly academics (professors). Below the Senate is the college or school headed by directors or principals under which are faculties (headed by deans) and academic departments.

Limited opportunities for dialogue and expression of views has become another serious concern in the issue of policy formation. Although the universities have an office of the Dean of Students, students do not find this channel appropriate for airing views critical of university administration and challenging government's position (Kwamong, 1992). Student associations and staff unions are seen as more appropriate for this. However, in several African universities, these bodies have either been banned (sometimes permanently) or have been compartmentalised to give room for divide-and-rule tactics.

Staff and student associations serve as important avenues through which their respective interests are articulated to the university administration and sometimes to the government. Lack of viable associations presents a communication problem between the various groups and the need for

strong organisations is particularly important in view of the increased numbers of students and staff (Kilemi, 1996).

Staff and student associations can diffuse potential conflicts through holding regular meetings with their members and the administration, designing mechanisms for regular communication, voicing members' grievances and restraining students from unnecessary violence. The associations can also act as links between staff and students, government/administration and the wider society on social, economic and political fronts. Other than the officially established channels for internal resolution of disagreements, formal and informal meetings that promote frequent and frank discussions and invoke a sense of collective responsibility between the various interest groups and stakeholders, can go a long way in resolving internal conflicts. Saint (1995) further asserts that where senior administrators have been easily accessible to staff and students, and where relations between various groups have been characterised by acceptable levels of informality, there has tended to be more understanding between the relevant parties.

Regular dialogues between various groups in the university through both formal and informal meetings can diffuse potentially explosive situations on campus (Coleman & Court, 1993). The University of Ghana's elaborate system of junior common rooms and the residence boards where senior administrators interact freely with students and staff, and where matters affecting students are aired has proved quite successful in improving relations between different interest groups within the university. It was the feeling of students and academics that many of the problems that lead to closures could be avoided if there was sufficient consultation between stakeholders before and during such crises (Kilemi, 1992). Vice-chancellors, their deputies and principals should hold constant briefing sessions after each Senate or Council meetings. Such sessions should be open to the university community where the officers will communicate and explain major decisions by the former bodies, and answer questions.

### **Democratisation of management structures**

Any overall strategy to stabilise and revitalise higher education on the continent must include changes in the prevailing structures of institutional governance in African universities. In various ways, existing mechanisms of campus governance contribute to destabilising internal and external tensions and constrain university responsiveness to the needs of local and regional markets, as well as society in general (Saint, 1995). Democratisation of decision-making is important not only because many conflicts emanate from unequal power relationships but also because universities, as advocates of democratic institutions, need to practise what they preach. Democratisation of university governance could be strengthened through widening the representation of students and staff in governing bodies, increasing the voice and role of academics and students in the selection of top university officials and through the strengthening of staff and student associations (Kilemi, 1996).

Making deanship and departmental headship elective positions has the potential of promoting some measure of democratisation and will generally tend to make the positions much more respectable and coveted. Deans of faculties would be further appreciated if they made efforts to promote participatory decision-making by calling regular faculty meetings to deliberate on the important matters affecting their faculties and by working through a system of faculty committees selected by the academic staff and students. If universities are to live up to the democratic ideals which a broad section of the university population demands from the rest of society, they have to seek ways of ensuring student representation in their key decision-making organs without sacrificing the necessary confidentiality. (Sherman, 1993).

In his argument for greater democratisation of governance in institutions of higher learning, Ochwada (1998) raised these pertinent questions;

- What makes modern higher education viable, productive and capable of progress?
- Is it compelling that power be divided, variety supported and ambiguity minimised in decision-making?
- How can we share power, distribute authority and delegate responsibility in management of higher education?
- How can we harness change and integrate competing systems within the university community?
- Is state power overcoming institutional autonomy?

However, he did not attempt to provide answers for these questions. This failure to provide suggestions to these important issues argue in favour of a study that can address itself to these issues. The most common model of decision-making in higher education is the collegiate system where a community of individuals makes most decisions within academia and groups, which share common aspirations and objectives for the organisation. Decision processing is mostly committee-based both at central, faculty and departmental levels. In response to factors such as financial stringency, demands for improved efficiency, the need to widen participation and respond to changing needs of the labour market, higher education institutions have had to change mechanisms, structures and styles of academic leadership and institutional management (Sanyal *et al*, 1995).

In addition to policy reforms, governments, the public and members of universities have become increasingly concerned not only in output of number and quality of graduates but also in the institutional processes and management methods. A 1997 survey conducted in Malaysia recommended that a more powerful but smaller decision-making body at the apex of universities include external participants (Lee, 1997). Departments could be restructured into larger groups to form viable decision-making and administrative units and more businesslike and enterprise-based structures be established with a strong central authority responsible for strategic planning.

In Ghana, the university rationalisation committee of 1989 recommended that membership of university councils be extended to two government nominees with the rest being students and staff (Sanyal *et al*, 1995). The universities of Botswana, Benin, Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique have conducted strategic planning exercises. For example, in Mozambique a major reorganisation of university governance is currently being carried out, a post of deputy rector for resources management has been created and the University Council is to include representatives of students, staff, government, public and private bodies. A relatively stable political environment favours improvement in management, strong leadership and democratic policy-making backed by control and accountability measures, accompanied by some degree of decentralisation of responsibility and availability of sufficient funds to implement change.

Locke and Lenning (1988) refer to a circular from the London's Department of Education to colleges and local education authorities, advising that in the establishment of membership of governing bodies, consideration should be given to the inclusion of students appointed through the students union. Representation should mean that there are at least two student representatives in any governing body of the college and that these representatives have voting rights. Other students designated by their union may attend as observers. This kind of communication has never come from Kenya's Ministry of Education and it would be of interest to elicit such a response from it. Since students are the consumers of education, their representation should extend beyond business, social, welfare and disciplinary matters to academic representation. They should be involved in the designing, preparation and review of courses and other academic programmes (Ochwada, 1998).

Epstein (1974) observed that any system of student representation, whatever the nature of the college, must suit the needs of the students and allow a form of representation for all students. Representation should extend to sub-committees of the academic boards and other governing bodies. Students and junior staff therefore resembled a disenfranchised population in a less than fully democratic society. Student unions often passed resolutions protesting university policy, although their main function, according to the authorities, was to manage certain socio-welfare and other extra-curricular programmes and thus to belong, as minor partners to the university governing machinery (Epstein, 1974). Representative positions, should have included membership in departmental and inter-departmental, college and faculty committees, seats in a university council, assignments of governing boards and even membership in a strictly student senate that is formally integrated in the broader university governing structure. Representation should be complete and not mere tokenism.

Governing authority is not generally distributed to students in accordance with their numbers; some may not be distributed to students at all and some authority may be so rationed that students have only a minority. A rationale for effective participation is that students will find it easier to accept decisions whose making their representatives have had a chance to observe as intimate though non-controlling participants. They are more likely to understand the motives for an otherwise objectionable policy and to appreciate that the motives were not malicious even if mistaken. In conclusion, Epstein (1974) asserts that governing rules should clearly define means of staff and students' participation in the formulation and application of institutional policy affecting academic and social affairs. The problem with these statements and conclusions is that they are not precise about the means or degree of student and staff participation and their inclusion seem to be mainly devoted to political freedom and procedural safeguards. This indicates a greater concern with the right of participation than with the mechanics of it.

Faculty and students feel a moral right to be consulted about significant issues. The task of the administrative management therefore is seeing to it that the elements of the organisation interact with each other satisfactorily in the flow of work, that each of them holds within its set of functions to perform effectively. This helps in ensuring that the procedures for dealing with all sorts of problems are understood and effectively used, and that the energies and resources of the institutions are applied to keep the institution in reasonable balance through time (Balderston, 1975).

### **Theoretical framework**

The study was underpinned by a decision process theory, which views organisational patterns and structures as the outcomes of the activities of individuals or groups within the organisations, rather than as the set of slots into which people are fitted and controlled. This framework focuses on how decisions are made and borrows heavily from the equilibrium theory. It stresses the fact that organisational members have very limited if not ambiguous information to help them make choices and decisions. The available information is often processed either with the cold calculative efficiency of a human computer or with the disinterested and unemotional coolness of a perfect bureaucrat. The theory believes that organisations are far less rational, consistent, purposive and integrative. It asserts that ambiguity, chance and accident are realities often downplayed in decision-making. As March & Olsen (1976) point out, choice processes provide opportunity for fulfilling duties, meeting commitments, justification of one's self, distributing glory or blame, exercising responsibility, challenging or reaffirming friendship, power-seeking, expressing group or self-interest to simply enjoying the experience of taking part in decision-making. The theory reaffirms that in decision-making, the choices preferred depend on problems,

available solutions, persons involved and time available. This theory is highly dependent on the following ingredients of participatory management:

- mechanisms for consultation
- consensus building
- policy options
- open discussions
- delegation or spread of authority
- concessions and implementation process.

It links most of these ingredients with the factors that influence students' participation in college administration. Such factors include but are not limited to the nature of the problem at hand, emergent policies of government, management structures, leadership styles, policy formation procedures alongside other governing variables.

## **Methodology**

The study used two separate structured questionnaires—one for administrators and another for students. The questionnaires contained both open and closed- ended questions, some of which required direct responses while others had a five-point scale measuring opinions and attitudes. There were also multiple choice questions with more than one possible response. Questionnaires were administered on 60 administrators, of whom 55% were senior administrative assistants, 20% consisted of deans of students and the rest were departmental heads. Out of this number only 45 questionnaires were recovered—13 from female respondents and 32 from male respondents.

After the face-to-face administration of the questionnaires, about 10 administrators were identified as key respondents and then involved in organised and pre-arranged focused discussions. The discussions centred on:

- Mechanisms that exist in their departments for regular consultations with students.
- Regularity of consultations if any.
- Ways through which student problems are processed.
- How policy issues are communicated to students.
- Causes of recurrent disturbances.
- Factors hindering effective participation of students in policy formation.

A total of 125 questionnaires were given out to students at the undergraduate level, of which 70 went to University of Nairobi students while the remaining 55 were given to Kenyatta University students. Out of these, 58 were recovered from University of Nairobi and 42 from Kenyatta University representing a rate of return of 82% and 60% respectively. After the face-to-face administration of questionnaires, 15 students (5 student leaders and 10 ordinary students) were identified as key interviewees. 35% of returned questionnaires were from females while the rest were from male students. After this, focus discussions were organised with an emphasis on:

- Their involvement in policy formation and decision-making.
- Their view of existing management structures, or decision-making organs and their level of participation in them.
- How they rate the effectiveness of student unions in decision-making and general campus governance.

- Probable causes of unrest and riots.
- Mode of appointment of administrative officials.

All the respondents were selected through random sampling procedures, but great care was taken to ensure fair representation of the most dominant colleges and faculties within the two universities. In terms of data analysis, descriptive measures were used to classify, summarise and interpret the meaning of raw scores and statements.

### **Research findings: Situational analysis**

64% of students interviewed affirmed that they are not at all involved in formulating policies. However, less than 5% of those involved participate directly in management boards while the rest consider themselves involved only through informal interactions with their student leaders and administrators. A large number in this bracket are consulted after meetings of decision-making organs while a smaller proportion is approached before such meetings. After decisions are made in management organs, students are not involved in the implementation process. Involvement is only through student unions and associations.

75% of the students interviewed said they find decisions emanating from management bodies non-responsive to their needs because:

- There is no proper and effective student participation as a result of low representation.
- University authorities are not interested in solving their problems.
- Most of the decisions made are never implemented. Those implemented are only as a result of pressure from students.
- Decisions usually don't conform to their opinions or suggestions as they are often ignored.

Apart from formal consultations through management organs, students argued that they are only addressed when there is a looming crisis. In terms of informal and regular consultations, departmental heads (chairmen) ranked high as they consult with their students before, during and after class sessions. Faculty deans were ranked second to chairmen, followed by the dean of students. College registrars, principals, directors and deputy vice-chancellors or vice-chancellors hardly ever meet students. Often they are not even seen for a whole semester, or at worst, an academic year. It was thus seen that the process of consultation is more effective at the department level, while consultations are almost non-existent at the college and university levels. The following were identified as factors hindering proper consultations:

- Lack of prompt and adequate information.
- Some administrators always complain of interference of external factors or higher authorities whenever there are problems.
- Administrators are keen and interested in individual and personal problems as opposed to group interests.
- Policy-makers do not always act unless forced by students to do so.
- Administrators lack autonomy in decision-making.
- Excessive bureaucracy.

About 80% of the interviewees admitted that not all the constituencies or interest groups within their colleges are adequately represented in decision-making organs of their respective universities. 30% are not even aware of who the members of these organs are. The rest said that there are too many administrators in these organs. The few student representatives who take part are often manipulated, while female students have not been sufficiently mainstreamed to

participate. This is a result of the nature of elections in student unions and possible consequences of student leadership.

Despite having established offices of deans of students, the majority of students still prefer processing their problems personally for fear of intimidation. Majority of the respondents identified university-wide student organisations as more responsive to their immediate needs. Others saw the national students union as more responsive owing to the fact that most of their problems stem from national leaders. District students associations were singled out as more sympathetic, ready to listen and often raise funds for their needs. Professional associations were rated low in terms of their ability to address immediate needs of students. Asked to propose alternative policy options to improve decision-making students identified the following for consideration:

- All interest groups like Christian unions and other professional groupings be involved in decision-making along with umbrella student bodies.
- Suggestion schemes be introduced.
- Consultations or interactions be intensified before decisions are made.
- Level of student representation in policy organs be increased fundamentally. There should be a balance between the number of administrators and students.
- Frequent meetings between students, their leaders and campus authorities.
- Student unions be made more independent and their elections more meaningful with least interference from the administration.

Many respondents confessed that they only take part in the activities of their organisations during annual assemblies, strikes and elections. Some argued that they only see the need for such unions when they have problems, while still others said they do not take part in union affairs at all, and would rather do without them.

The student respondents identified the following as actual causes of riots.

1. Management and leadership styles by university authorities.
2. Lack of proper consultation and involvement in decision-making.
3. Financial cutbacks and living conditions.
4. Insensitive varsity and government policies.

On the contrary, administrators interviewed felt that the recurrent unrest or disturbances are caused by:

1. Tendency by sections of the university community to question the government on matters ranging from corruption in high places to the limitation of democratic decision-making.
2. External factors, for example interference by politicians.
3. Economic hardships.
4. Cumbersome decision-making processes which often lead to bureaucratic gridlock.
5. Lack of consultation with students when critical decisions are made.
6. Very weak and disorganised central students' union with various splinter groups. This has led to lack of trust between students and their leaders, as some of them have been effectively co-opted to serve the interests of the authorities. Such unions therefore do not address grievances of students and as a result, they lack student support.
7. There is no effective representation of students at all levels of decision-making and in cases where students have been given room to participate in policy debates, they either make very unrealistic demands or give weak contributions.
8. Most administrators consider students as incapable, unqualified or uninterested in contributing to organisational decision-making process.

However, the administrators were quick to add that when and if students are effectively involved in decision-making the benefits would be enormous:

- This reduces the possibility of rejecting decisions passed.
- Formulated policies will address and respond to their needs and as such minimise conflict around policy statements.
- Students will be positively co-opted into the administrative machinery leading to better understanding of management problems. They will also give their views freely, suggest their priorities and endorse decisions to forestall explosive situations. This will lead to fewer disruptions due to a conducive working and learning environment.

In terms of mechanisms that exist in various faculties and departments for regular consultations with students, about 55% of the administrators interviewed said that they only rely on *ad hoc* committees as issues arise. Another 25% claimed that they have regular meetings with students through their representatives every two weeks, while 5% were found to be relying on suggestion schemes and complaints books. 15% did not consult at all unless there was a serious problem.

The majority of the administrators admitted that they only meet with their students when there is a problem bordering on an uprising. Some administrators meet their students once every semester, while others said that apart from occasionally meeting students in management organs, they only meet them at lectures. Administrators who have managed to encourage the formation of student committees have only done so at the welfare level to discuss accommodation and catering problems. Other committees have also been formed on culture and sports while there have not been any on academic and career issues. A considerable number of interviewed administrators admitted that they do not have any committees and solely depend on established management organs. Even those who encouraged the formation of student committees in their departments rarely take part in the activities and meetings of these committees. They only meet the general student fraternity in their respective departments during orientation sessions, farewell and get-together parties. Others attend assemblies and other meetings of student organisations or interact with them informally in their dining-halls during meals. As far as communicating policy issues or decisions over 75% administrators use circulars and memos while the rest use either student representatives, make announcements during common lectures or write in college magazines. The study also revealed that students neither rely on nor trust their own union leaders as more than 68% usually present their problems individually or as small groups to the administration.

The administrators identified the following as factors hindering effective student participation in decision-making:

- Limited intellectual capacity, lack of maturity and exposure owing to their tender age
- When students participate in management organs, they only make demands.
- Most of them lack interest in college matters.
- Most do not attend college meetings, as they are too busy looking for money and food.
- Academic pressures and class demands.
- Ineffective and unequal involvement.

The study further revealed that the existing management structures and attendant decision-making schemes are biased. Governance by vice-chancellors, their deputies and principals is personalised and arbitrary. Their judgement is not closely scrutinised by the existing bureaucratic rules or college norms that would ordinarily foreclose individual discretion. On the other hand, student leaders choose to be apologists of college authorities because the advantages of being cronies far outweigh those of being neutral instruments of larger academic governance. Students

exercise the right to have their say through protests since they are not often consulted when decisions are taken. Personal rule predominates because the system encourages leaders to elaborate their roles. This is often oriented to personal profit, serving sectarian ideals and subordinating less loyal staff and students.

Senior professors typically acquire rights and monopoly of advice and consultation in central decision-making. Predominant factors that either influence or constrain managerial choices and administrative decisions were established as:

- Organisational size, culture, climate and environment
- Management structures, policy formation procedures and decision strategies.
- Micro and macro politics i.e. internal and external political dispensations.
- Information release and exchange systems and communication patterns.
- Administrative performance.
- Expectations of students and staff.
- Demands of the wider society and government.
- Conditions of development partners and sponsors.
- Demands of internal interest groups.
- Demands and personal commitments of senior administrators.

Within the universities, academic and management staff and students are often in disagreement with their administration. This could be over living conditions, allowances and loans, terms of service, their limited representation in university governing bodies and their perception of the administrators as defenders of the state as opposed to the interest of the university community. In such cases, students often see university authorities as implementers of government directives, for which they have not been consulted.

The other major cause of discontent among students and staff is the dominance of university councils by government nominees. While academic staff seem to be generally satisfied with their participation and standard of discussions at faculty board levels, they are discontent with discussions at departmental and college levels. They argue that institutions of heads of department, principals of colleges and directors of institutes often limit participatory decision-making because:

- a. They are direct appointees of either the chancellors or vice-chancellor hence they consider themselves 'above' their colleges or departments.
- b. Academics are often preoccupied with other issues apart from teaching and research. As a result, they tend to have little time for departmental meetings.

Heads of departments resort to single-handed decisions, which they then present to faculty boards as views from the members. Another source of conflict between students and the administration is the limited opportunity for expression. Although the universities have an office of the dean of students, students do not use it for airing views critical of the university administration or government for fear of reprisals. Student associations are seen as more appropriate for this, but these have been banned, co-opted as extensions of the administration or otherwise compartmentalised to allow for divide and rule tactics.

Moreover, the victimisation of student leaders and those who actively participate in college affairs has discouraged potential leaders. Universities must nurture future leaders by encouraging student leadership. Staff and student associations serve as important avenues through which their staff and student interests are articulated to the university administration. The lack of viable associations presents problems of communication between various groups.

Students and administrators alike felt that many of the crises leading to closures could be avoided if there was enough consultation between all stakeholders, before, during and after such crises. A pattern of co-operation between staff and student associations and the administration to allow for regular dialogue was also found lacking. This would be useful in defusing explosive situations on campus. Respondents further felt that strict control of information flow; inadequate, ambiguous or partial nature of available information also contributes to tensions and conflicts. Students observed that morale and productivity is more affected by their need to be secure, involved, recognised and to be kept in good condition, other than any level of monetary inducement. They demonstrated an intrinsic desire to actively belong to a group, establish and foster college fora. They also felt that most of their administrators are either scared or not concerned with basic problems of social integration of the student community. They cited imposed decisions, motivation by threats or selective rewards, low levels of communication and less emphasis on teamwork as some of the causes of managerial problems. Most administrative assistants interviewed admitted that decision-making is still not student-centred as the process is tightly controlled by chairmen, deans, principals and vice-chancellors.

Most decisions are ambiguous, preference orderings are inconsistent and unstable, efforts at communication and understanding are often ineffective, subsystems are loosely connected and most attempts at social integration are clumsy and unpredictable. It was also in the opinion of many that conflict usually arises as soon as the authorities make demands that are seen as unfair or call for an increase in efforts or changes without offering an increase in reward. Other factors or forces affecting academic administration are value system of the leaders, how strongly they feel that individual members should share in decision-making, the relative importance they attach to organisational efficiency, personal growth of students and the level of confidence in their abilities. Handpicked dons are conservative and seem obsessed with maintaining the *status quo*.

College administrations very often practice tyranny in the name of discipline. They seek to control students' behaviour and to influence their way of thinking through rules and other bureaucratic controls. It is assumed that allowing students a greater say in the running of their own college affairs would be a threat to 'peace and stability of the universities'. Where consulted, students registered disappointment about the process, citing limited powers and abuse of committee proposals. In both Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi, the Executive is still the crucial decision-making body since faculty institutional management bureaucracies and student governance function as parallel but separate and distinct hierarchies. The existing models of university governance have failed in practice when subjected to the stress of student disorders and disruptions of the 1990s. Most management organs only meet after disturbances either to close the university or discuss disciplinary measures or review damages caused.

On the other hand, beyond the realm of negotiating financial and welfare terms and conditions, student unions have been grossly ineffective because they tend to operate according to adversarial principles often incompatible with those of traditional collegial governance. Shared decision-making is less common in universities as vice-chancellors still wield more power. Group decisions often consist merely of endorsement or implementation of decisions made unilaterally by leaders. In most university campuses issuing orders is easy enough, but getting people to follow them is always difficult. In most academic and college boards and their committees, the non-professorial representation is considerably low while the professorial and administrative representation remains predominant. Arguments against greater diffusion of power among junior academicians and students have centred on:

- Desirability of economy of effort.
- The argument that quality of decisions will be impaired if they are democratically and equally contributed to by many people of limited experience and lesser academic accomplishment.

Within the academic departments, the formal disposition of power is more authoritarian than in the wider university. Here, it is the head of department who is responsible for the pattern and the timetable of courses provided, activities conducted and subjects offered. There is no consultation whatsoever with students at this level. Heads of departments consult their staff on development policy through their irregular staff meetings. The head of department occasionally delegates authority.

In conclusion, the process of renewal within Kenyan universities can only begin to take shape when universities themselves seize the initiative. There is no better entry point than the academic department.

## **Proposals for the way forward**

### **Participatory management and its application to university administration**

The administrative bodies of Kenyatta and Nairobi universities should prioritise institutional self-assessment, a process that facilitates sharing of information and consensus building on topical and emergent issues. It also encourages institutional development and assists team effort. This will give the universities an opportunity to highlight their structural weaknesses and reveal their strengths. These universities have been labelled as resistant to change. Any initiative for reform of Kenyan universities must come from the universities themselves.

Institutional self-assessment gives the universities an opportunity to use objective means in appraising their work, in evaluating their management organs and in planning their future. A framework will have to be worked out to assess their performance and effectiveness on the basis of:

- stability
- predictability
- productivity
- student/staff satisfaction
- returns on invested capital
- rate/degree of growth
- balancing the range of conflicting demands of various coalitions and
- ability to recognise and address most strategic priorities.

All these indicators should be mirrored against the decision-making process, organs and procedures and the resultant relationship established. The over-riding concern of these universities should be efficiency and productivity in the process of governance.

The baseline of this self-review should be a thorough look at governance structures to address the involvement of faculty, staff and students at all levels of policy formulation. It calls for a critical measurement of how the work of various constituencies, units and individuals contributes to the effective functioning of the universities. Sharing of ideas is paramount as policies are considered and agreement reached regarding institutional priorities. This consultative approach ensures that the relationship between administrators, faculty, staff and students is held in proper perspective and the chances of disruptive conflict minimised.

In order to effect democratisation of higher education management in Kenya, existing organisational structures, their composition, operational rules and procedures would have to be modified to be consistent with demands for an all-inclusive approach to academic administration. Some of the concepts to be considered for debate in the proposed modification may include:

- power distribution
- institutional autonomy
- accountability
- common goals and priorities
- information sharing
- democratisation
- flexibility and openness.

The council, university management board and senate, who are the supreme policy-making bodies, require proportionate representation of the different constituencies of the university community.

One of the major weaknesses of the management bodies is the pervasive powers the President has in appointing senior university administrators and external members of these organs. The second is the limited participation of the students and non-professorial academics and the third is the discretionary role of the vice-chancellor in these bodies. One must closely examine the following:

- How best can students participate in decision-making in their universities?
- To what extent can we democratise university decision-making structures to give them adequate representation?
- How can an effective liaison between students' associations be established to provide them with self-government and the university decision-making structures as well as policy regulation offices?
- How can the energies of students be harnessed to effect changes in the institutions that they find unsatisfactory?
- What programmes, organs and services would universities have to institutionalise for democracy in academic governance?
- How can students be used to improve their work and living environments?
- How can the academic system distribute and legitimise powers or authorities?

Most important to all, there should always be open and simple lines of communication for students and administrators, from departmental heads up to the vice-chancellor. This would also help students recognise their responsibility in improving their own situations or solving their own problems and those of their universities. In this respect, informal discussions can contribute greatly to creating a conducive atmosphere for students to air their views and build on mutual trust.

At another level, the fundamental task is to identify patterns of legitimate authority in the dominant locations of certain groups and acknowledge that to seek the realities of academic power is not to pursue hidden agenda and power plays. This scenario will be avoided if power and authority is shared equally, distributed fairly and decentralised effectively among all the dominant groups within the campus community. This argument boils down to collegial stewardship, which sees collective control as a classic form of traditional authority rooted in the Weberian typology of characteristic leadership.

Academic administration by a group of scholars, administrative staff and students is virtually to solve mechanisms for co-ordination of faculty and college programmes as well as other levels of university organisations. Its strength lies in the election or appointment of board members and

their heads from the lower levels. This will ensure popular and collective control that locates decision-making in a body supported by the whole structure. Councils and management boards should be turned into governing bodies of externally chosen non-academic citizens (technocrats from corporate sector and civil society) and internally chosen academicians and students. If these methods are made conventional, universities will conceive their authority as legitimately public and yet largely autonomous. There will be a form of dispersed public control because as trustees, the outsiders will represent the larger interest of the general public or specific interest of development patterns in the corporate world.

This will directly relate higher education to the sectors of society, associate outsiders with institutions and break prevalent patterns of bureaucratic control. It is a corporatist approach that entails the systematic insertion of taxpayers into the complex equations of university management. The idea of colleges being turned into chartered corporations responsible for self-management and regulation should be considered. Each would then be able to administer its own students, arrange its own courses, generate resources and hire staff.

Recent governmental policies have induced a build-up of administrative control. This is because public officials have responded to problems of growth, equity, accountability and management by enacting laws that require larger central government units to disburse funds, set priorities, institute uniform requirements, check compliance and otherwise implement public policies that affect universities. Such external influence inhibits open decision-making.

University administrations have generally been conditioned by certain national cultures. This development gives the universities a challenge to redefine their contexts, have their own distinct internal cultures and run programmes which are not prone to external pressures and which do not respond to subjective political interests of state élite.

Democratisation of decision-making is important not only because many conflicts emanate from unequal power relationships, but also because universities, as advocates of democratic ideals and institutions, need to practice what they preach. Democratisation of university governance could be strengthened through widening the representation of students and staff in governing bodies, increasing the role of academics and students in the selection of top varsity officials and through empowerment of staff and student associations. Government interference in university affairs should be decreased without sacrificing university accountability to both government and society at large.

Staff and student associations often defuse potentially conflictual situations through holding regular meetings with their members where matters affecting staff and students welfare are discussed and alternatives suggested. The same meetings can be used to explain university or state policies that affect students and staff. Professional and welfare associations can also be useful in:

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- Designing schemes for regular communication with members and the administration.
- Organising meetings where the administration is able to interact with students and staff.
- Sending important signals to the administration regarding disagreements and conflict situations that can lead to strikes.
- Restraining students from unnecessary violence or from making unrealistic demands.
- Explaining to their members the role they could play in strengthening the university administration.
- Acting as a link between staff, students and the administration, government and the wider society on social, economic and political fronts.

Regular meetings between the administration, staff and students can facilitate the anticipation of crises and give forewarning. In cases where resolution of any grievances is dependent on government action, the university administration should organise fora or meetings between staff, and student representatives with relevant government officials.

Relations between various groups are also likely to be less hostile if sensitive information is promptly disseminated to those concerned. Vice chancellors, their deputies, principals, directors, deans and department heads should hold regular briefings after each council, senate or board meeting. Such sessions should be open to the entire university community where the administrators would communicate and explain major policy decisions by management organs subsequently entertaining questions.

Student unrest results in damaging the image of the university as a source of inspiration and service. Other effects include:

- massive destruction of university and public property
- loss of life for both university students and the public
- an increase in university running-costs
- de-professionalism of academia
- loss of public esteem and respect for students and staff
- unnecessary changes in higher education
- disruption in planning of human resource development
- loss of funding, consultancies and intellectual contacts.

The universities must evolve appropriate leadership styles and practices. Delegation and communication channels should be followed considering the concerns and expectations of students in light of the prevailing structural circumstances. Students and staff should be actively involved in decision-making if they are to be fulfilled and effective in following up decisions made. Participation will also increase their level of output. In this regard, university authorities should have sessions at the beginning of every academic year that allow students to set their priorities and goals.

Students should also come up with their own evaluation, monitoring and feedback systems to help them assess implementation of set priorities. They should have rational procedures of making decisions on appropriate action, as this will endear them to the administration and help build trust between them and the administration. However, this calls for the authorities to recognise that the university system is made up of creative, questioning and choice-making individuals who want to be consulted and involved on issues that affect their lives. Academic leaders should also recognise that the university—as any other organisation—is made up of a collection of competing groups and individuals that only co-operate when it suits their private or sectional purposes. All stakeholders have their own private interests and goals to pursue or defend, and as a result, need to be given effective structures and an enabling environment to follow such pursuits without hindrance.

If this is done, the university systems will remain rational and therefore decisions and procedures will be based on careful considerations of the appropriate means to attaining goals. University authorities should not co-opt student leaders to use as spies. To treat students as self-seeking individuals is to fail to see the consensual co-operative interdependence vital to any effective social system. Student unions and associations must be allowed to operate freely and independently. College administrations must show sufficient interest in students and their affairs, because unless this is done, effective patterns of communication and strong feelings of social

cohesion cannot be fostered. As administrators and students encourage consultation between themselves, they should recognise some basic element imperative for adequate consultations:

- Consultation and consensus-building should occur early in the decision-making process.
- Procedures for consultation should be uniform and fair to all parties.
- Adequate time should be given for responding to requests for consultation.
- Information relevant to the decision-making process should be readily available.
- Suggestions made must be adequately considered and feedback given.
- Decisions and their implications should be promptly communicated to all consulting groups and stakeholders.
- Access to coalition building and task orientation.
- Information exchange and accommodation of conflicting needs.
- Flexibility and power distribution.
- Institutionalisation of group processes.

It therefore follows that sharing of formal authority through different power centres should exist within the campus. The scope and form of internal participation of authority should be characterised by full and open consultations with emphasis on joint endeavours and common approaches. Benefits of participatory decision-making should be viewed with the following in mind:

- Value consensus, solidarity building, co-operation, integration and acceptance of authority
- Sensitisation of individuals to institutional needs
- Quality decisions and proper communication
- Foster shared responsibility in governance
- Sharing the framing of regulations, formulating policies and taking operational decisions makes outcomes popular and acceptable to all
- Increased efficiency in resource use
- Improved student morale and achievement
- Implementation of popular reform proposals
- Enhanced and positive community engagement
- Increased professionalism and team work in administration.

However participation in any programme must be voluntary and self-induced. Such participation becomes useful since the administration does not have enough information to solve problems alone. Students also have a strong desire to exercise power, take responsibility and make their own judgements.

In a true college community, relationships are based on shared values rather than bureaucratic roles. This results in individuals who care, listen, understand, respect others and are honest, open and sensitive. College heads must ultimately build relationships and power centres based on professional and moral authority. If colleges are to avoid bad leadership, existing students' management policies, decision-making procedures and administrative practices must be appraised critically. Colleges must also be made accountable to the society from which they draw input. Accountability implies a willingness to be scrutinised and to some extent, controlled. Making colleges accountable entails the participation of their members in management.

In order to facilitate achievement of goals, colleges must keep their publics well informed through the establishment of college communities or groups, providing opportunities for college members and founders to participate in decision-making and provision of a good system of information exchange. Since colleges belong to their publics, students, teachers, staff and other interested parties should be engaged in the tasks of setting goals, performance standards, reviewing adequacy of teaching/learning programmes and feedback mechanisms. The most

important element of the proposed critical appraisal is for organisational structures of these colleges to be democratised. This will allow meaningful participation of students in management of their own affairs. In all cases it must be recognised that democracy is a matter of practice not theory. Students will learn to be democratic by practising it in their own committees, unions, classrooms and management styles.

Collaborative efforts in mainstreaming all stakeholders to participate in formulating the mission, planning, developing, monitoring and improving infrastructural programmes in the colleges is essential for an improved college environment. The morale of the staff will rise when they influence decisions concerning the college. The most important role of academic leaders is to co-ordinate implementation of decisions made in consultation with stakeholders.

There has been considerable tranquillity and progress where consultation has been institutionalised and democratised. Like all structures and forms of government, no matter how well intentioned or finely designed, the success of consultation fundamentally depends on the integrity and dedication of those who participate. This brings into focus the quality, mode and nature of appointments to positions of leadership and to policy formation organs. Where nobody is in charge, a more participatory approach implies the need for feedback, properly available information and less secrecy. This is not an ideological preference but a technological imperative.

When decisions result from consultative processes, more than one person is involved in defining the problem, in weighing alternative courses of action, in determining the implications of proposed solutions and in structuring responses. Staff and student groups are persuaded—not ordered—to co-operate in the implementation. Under these circumstances, all existing feedback mechanisms are relied on for information and analysis, which are then used to weigh alternatives and to evaluate them. The result—sound management techniques, efficient leadership and effective human relations practices—suggests that both vertical and horizontal consultations are essential for appropriate initiation of task-oriented activities.

Decisions that affect the university should be taken only by those who bear the consequences of those decisions and who have sufficient knowledge and understanding of how the university works in order to make the right decisions. Subsequently, effective decision-making must remain in the hands of staff and students. It again follows that the automatic rights of all professors to a seat in the senate or college boards should cease. At least 70% of them should be replaced with non-professional staff and students. For effective management, a cost-effective mechanism must be created to ensure that those with decision-making power have the necessary information, without overloading the decision-makers with unnecessary and subjective information.

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