



REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, DURING THE INDUCTION WORKSHOP FOR PUBLIC UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MEMBERS, MONDAY, APRIL 10TH, 2017 AT THE SIMBA LODGE, NAIVASHA.

The Principal Secretary, State Department of University Education

Chairperson, Commission for University Education

Ag. Commission Secretary, Commission for University Education

Chairpersons of Councils

Council Members

Vice Chancellors

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to be among you during this induction workshop for Public University Council Members. I take this early opportunity to congratulate you for your appointment as Council Chairpersons and Members. In our midst, we also have the Vice Chancellors of your respective universities and other Chairpersons of Councils that have not yet been reconstituted. Your presence in this meeting is crucial since some of you have been part of the university education system and your insights and experiences in the governance of public universities in Kenya is of key importance to this training.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the role of the Council of any given University is fundamental. This is because the Council, through playing its governance role, is expected to be the pillar of strength in the University. It is in recognition of this important role that the Ministry of Education, together with the Commission for University Education, considered it necessary to hold this two-day induction workshop in order to ensure that all Council Chairpersons and Members are reading from the same page.

Ladies and Gentlemen, several legislative frameworks are in place internationally, regionally, and, more specifically, nationally, to support the effective and efficient governance of universities. More specific to Kenya, the *Universities Act, 2012* clearly articulates the roles of the Council. In addition, the *Constitution of Kenya, 2010* stipulates the national values and principles of governance that would apply to Kenya. As members of the universities' councils, it is your responsibility to read and internalize the legal provisions that define and support your roles, so as to ensure that you are effective in the performance of your duties. It is also necessary that you understand the roles of all the other actors in the management of universities and prepare to work smoothly with them to ensure the growth, effective management and development of your respective institutions

Ladies and Gentlemen, the deteriorating standards of university education in Kenya is a cause of great concern to me. **The National Audit of universities in Kenya that was recently carried out, in response to an outcry from the public on the quality of university education in Kenya, clearly exposes the rot in our Kenyan universities.** The audit reports reflected weaknesses in specific areas, including:-

1. Admission of students who had not attained minimum university entry requirements;
2. Missing of students' grades and transcripts;
3. Grant of credit transfers to students who did not have the requisite qualifications for such consideration;
4. Lack of minimum lecture hours for specific disciplines among graduates of various programmes. This problem was rampant among those who were undertaking **school-based and executive degree** programmes;
5. Award of honorary degrees to individuals who did not possess outstanding accomplishments;
6. Rampant plagiarism of papers among students;
7. Weaknesses in the authenticity and validity of the process and security of academic documents of universities, including certificates;
8. Lack of internal quality assurance mechanisms and structures in universities;
9. Inadequacy of academic resources to support the academic programmes of the universities.

These are just but a few of the findings of the **National Audit** carried out late last year. Other concerns of the quality of university education in Kenya include the mismatch between the many of the programmes on offer at the universities and the demands of the labour market; lack of appropriate research outputs and innovations to influence the national development agenda; financial mismanagement and instability; and ethnicity in the recruitment and promotion of staff in some universities.

Concerns on the quality of university education offered by universities in Kenya have not just been expressed in Kenya but also outside our borders. I am aware that, as a result of mismanagement of finances, one of our public universities lost a substantial amount of money while establishing a campus out of the country. Another public university had its campus, outside the country, closed as a result of failing to meet the minimum benchmarks for existence as a university. **It is clear that the problem of lack of quality university education is more profound in the public universities than in the private universities.**

The concerns raised on the quality of university education in Kenya are a true reflection of either poor governance structure; or lack of knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience among the members of the University Councils. There is an urgent need to redeem the reputation of our university education in Kenya. This can only happen if the University Councils actively take up their roles and ensure that quality is maintained and enhanced in the universities.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you take up your responsibilities, I urge you to, within the next 100 days, to attend to the following three (3) issues that require your immediate intervention:

1. Interrogate your individual university's Audit Report and institutional roadmap on corrective measures and ensure prompt actions are taken, in line with the roadmap. As members of University Councils, you need to closely monitor the progress of implementation of the recommendations of the Audit Reports;
2. Ensure that your University has in place an integrated electronic information management system that facilitates accurate acquisition of information; timely collection of reliable data to support effective decision making, planning and

management of universities; and effectiveness and efficiency in the management of student records, all the way from admissions to registrations to examinations and grading and finally to carrying out of student audits and graduation. I hereby require of the Commission for University Education and the State Department of University Education at the Ministry of Education to ensure that no graduation ceremony takes place this year in any University that has not put in place an electronic student information management system.

3. Ensure that there is an existing quality assurance system in place in your University for purposes of safeguarding academic standards in the provision of university education. Aspects that you will need to pay special attention to include: the governance and management of the university; efficiency in the running of student affairs; quality of provision of academic programmes, including adequacy of academic resources to support the programmes; and financial management. Checks and balances should be imposed to safeguard the finances of the institution. You are also required to ensure that risk management procedures are in place in your University for purposes of promoting efficiency in your administrative systems.
 - The necessity of reforms in University education cannot be gainsaid. The challenges to university education are not basically Kenyan. They are global and confront other environments too. There could be some that are specifically Kenyan but issues like financing higher education, the capacity of institutions and governments to meet the increasing demand for university education, the questions about relevance & quality of university education etc. are global. However, interestingly, there is no debate about the need for higher education, its contribution to economic development and the general returns/dividend of higher education to our economy.
 - As we grapple with all these issues, it is necessary that we build a united front, a coalition of focused reform. The reforms can never be driven by any individual, however endowed, they should never be targeting particular individuals or sections of the university community. It is unity of purpose, a willingness to constantly engage and a focus on making universities and university education in Kenya better that should guide all of us.

- Faced with a daunting demand for university education, committed to the achievement of vision 2030 and ensuring greater development of our country, the government is now determined to drive major reforms to university education in the country.
- Education is a strategic issue, it is about a nation's survival. It can make a difference between the countries that actually move forward and sustain development and those that do not. If you doubt this, refer to the growth and development of the so called Asian tigers. We do not have a choice but to very carefully look at our universities and university education in Kenya and do what we must to reform it.
- The objectives of these reforms are fourfold: -
 1. To address the issues of the quality of our university education
 2. To effectively address the growing demand for university education in Kenya
 3. To ensure efficiency and prudence in the use of available resources to achieve 1 and 2 above
 4. To enhance competitiveness of our universities and thereby enhance their resource base
- The process of reforming the sector will require all of us- because we are all stakeholders. Going forward, let the conversation begin. The conversation on how we can do better; manage our institutions better, avoid past mistakes some of which have caused us to lose many opportunities and correct some of these mistakes quickly and effectively enough to restore the credibility and integrity of our education system. That conversation should culminate in a radical and historic review of the **proposed Sessional Paper no 4 on Reforming Education and Training Sectors in Kenya. Work towards this policy begun in 2012 and stalled.** We have revived it and through all the structures represented here and even some not in this forum, we should collectively look at this policy and revise it thoroughly so as to articulate both our national aspirations, the sectoral imperatives and the necessary vision for, education, especially university education in our country. This policy will have to be in harmony with the ongoing curriculum reform and reorient university education to the demands of our 2010 constitution, addressing critical

issues such as equity and access to university education in tandem with the aspirations of that constitution.

- While we work on this comprehensive reform, the journey towards our desired destination of quality and relevant university education must begin in earnest. We all know what we have gone through, the mistakes we have made in the past and know the opportunities we have so far lost. Not all is lost though. Let us now begin on a trajectory of bold and focused reform that will help transform universities and university education in Kenya to the level we all desire. Some of these decisions will require sacrifice and the firm commitment of all of us. I suggest the following 10 point plan for that reform project: -

1. **Greater institutionalization of our public universities-** The disjointed nature of university operations have hurt the institutional growth of public universities. Monumental decisions have been made on the bases of individual whims and preferences thereby occasioning massive loss of resources and unspeakable wastage. The opening -up of some of the satellite campuses across the country and even some of the regional campuses where we have lost image and colossal amount of resources is a case in Point. There must be a synergy between all governance organs of the university. The Senate must be listened to on all academic matters, the VC, Council and Chancellor must work together. Deliberate efforts must be made to have strong and credible senates. Councils must check the health and quality of institutional relations in the university at all times.
2. **Improved governance-**It is not a secret that we have very serious challenges in the governance of our public universities; Conflict of interest, nepotism, outright corruption and mismanagement of resources. There are on-going investigations in some cases. In some others, it is very clear that crimes have been committed. There are public universities in the country where senior management have employed their family members and promoted others in blatant cases of conflict of interest. University management organs have been weakened or in some cases circumvented deliberately to avoid accountability. Public universities are Semi-autonomous government agencies (SAGAs) and are bound to operate strictly under the public financial management framework and religiously adhere to the

code of conduct expected, especially of senior management in such institutions. We will expect that Councils should ensure that the poor governance and corruption witnessed in some of the institutions is checked effectively.

3. **Intense deployment of technology in all matters of the universities-** It is not acceptable that in this day and age, some of our institutions cannot account for their students' grades. It is shameful that for a country of our status, we continue to deal with such issues as poor record keeping and general information management. This must come to an end forthwith. Going forward, all our universities must deploy and embrace the use of technology in all their operations.
4. **Reformed Financial Management, transparency, accountability and reduction of wastage-** The level of pilferage and poor financial management in some of our institutions is shocking. Specifically, the management of the A in A or the module II/ income generating activities resources is very poorly and corruptly done in most of our public universities. This must stop. University Councils are ultimately responsible for the financial management systems in the universities and everything must be done to ensure we reform these systems in all our universities.
5. **A review of faculty development programmes in our universities-** Every University must develop, maintain and consistently review its staff development programme. I require the CUE to include a review/assessment of this as part of the annual report that universities must submit to the regulator.
6. **A bold review of universities' non-core staff establishment and employment policies-** It is abundantly clear that some universities have become employment bureaus. I expect every university Council to not only have clear employment and labour policies but to critically assess their manpower requirements to ensure the institutions of higher learning recruit and maintain only the staff they need.
7. **Direct address to the learning ecosystem in the universities-It is time to address the soft issues that contribute greatly to quality of learning environment in the universities**
8. **A deliberate reform of universities attention to research and funding the same.**
9. **A thorough review of our university programmes to address the issue of relevance and quality of university education.**

10. **Develop a better and more scientific growth plan for the universities to check massification.** Online university programmes have become critical to improving access to university education. It is time that universities figured out how they can increase access to university education through quality, relevant and dependable online programmes.

In addition, I urge you to fix your eyes on the achievement of the objectives of university education and to ensure that you promote teaching, research, innovation and community service, in line with your University's Vision and the national and global development agenda. You also need to take time to audit the policies needed and in place in for purposes of increasing your efficiency as a university.

The unscientific expansion of universities through establishment of satellite campuses and mounting of academic programmes, oblivious of the availability of adequate and appropriate academic resources and infrastructure for their support has contributed to the deterioration of the academic standards in our universities. I urge you, as the organ charged with the responsibility of approving both establishment of satellite campuses and mounting of academic programmes in the University, to rationalize the existence of your campuses and programmes. Consideration should be given to the closing of some campuses and programmes, with a view of optimizing on the quality of university education given, vis-a-vis the adequacy of the available academic resources for their support.

Ladies and Gentlemen, your success as a Council will not be possible without close collaboration with various government institutions and agencies, whose mandates are key to firming up your role. These institutions and agencies include the Ministry of Education, Commission for University Education, Kenya University and Colleges Central Placement Service, Universities Funding Board; National Research Fund, National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation; and Kenya Innovation Agency, among others.

Lastly, I thank all the players who ensured that this induction workshop was actualized.

It is now my pleasant duty to declare this induction workshop officially open.

