

Towards a Culture of Quality Management at SASS, Moi University: Changing lecturers' Attitudes to Student Assessment/QM

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Abstract

Enormous changes characterize university management in various aspects all over the world today, introducing new concepts to describe old and new approaches towards effectiveness. Among these is the concept and practice of quality management. Quality management has three components: quality control; quality assurance, and quality improvement. Quality assurance for example requires sufficient planning and development of appropriate tools, which are designed to measure performance of lecturers with regard to knowledge, skills, pedagogy and experience in teaching specific courses for quality assurance. The analysis of the data/information acquired, following the administration of assessment tools, should be targeted towards quality assurance not in a vacuum, but through the strategic development of improvement action plans, within which the best practices are appreciated and built upon, while the weaknesses are responded to with mediating/correcting initiatives. The paper, therefore, picks out the attitudinal challenges of introducing quality assurance, within an African higher education setting as a central theme. It focuses on the East Africa region as coordinated by the IUCEA, Moi University and specifically locates the dialogue within the context as experienced during the implementation of this writer's Personal Action Plan (PAP) in the School of Arts and Social Sciences (SASS), and more specifically in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Moi University. The action plan was developed in the course of the writer's participation in the International Deans' Course on Faculty Management, an initiative of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), the Center for Higher Education Development (CHE), the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) and

experts from Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya, and Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. We demonstrate that change of attitude, which is a necessary prerequisite to accepting change, is possible in spite of specific challenges.

Key words: Higher education, quality management, performance, development

Introductory Background

A defining characteristic of our contemporary times is globalization, the complex process through which the world has become a “global village,” within which ideas, services and goods are exchanged almost instantaneously from one corner to the other, without state control. In the words of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), time and space have shrunk to previously unimagined levels and national or other borders have virtually disappeared (UNDP 1999). With technological advancements facilitating improved communication, and transport services leading to reduced costs and increased effectiveness, international trade has increasingly proliferated (Krueger 2006). Dismantling of trade barriers such as trans-border control and taxes first effected under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1947, and more recently international policies such as liberalization of markets, have served to further enhance international trade.

Globalization has created a vibrant and dynamic global market, in which competition is the guiding value. Indeed, the assumption of globalization in the current information age is that competitive markets translate into better and cheaper services in different forms, thus giving consumers many choices. Theoretically, making the world a global village therefore increases accessible suppliers and consumers of goods, services and ideas, which in turn leads to innovation and effectiveness. This trend has had a major impact on various institutions, demanding that they change the way of fulfilling their tasks in terms of identity, mission, structure and methodologies. In some situations, institutions have had to change even their tasks and mission.

In the context of higher education, globalization has led to increasing interactions and interconnections between and among students, academic staff and university managers across the world. With the onset of the contemporary “information age,” and the appreciation of knowledge as a commodity referred to as “intellectual property” and its consequent recognition as legal tender, such interactions and interconnections have gained prominence. For institutions of higher learning, internationalization is the net impact of globalization. In spite of internationalization of higher education, the mandate of universities continues to be that of teaching and training, research and extension/outreach. However, the way universities carry out this man-

date has dramatically changed, exhibiting various trends. The subject of trends in higher education in the context of internationalization has been of interest to many scholars, especially from the west (see for example de Wit 2002 and Scott 1998), some categorizing the trends in terms of internal changes and external changes, while others categorize them in terms of changes in content, structure and pedagogy. Two interrelated factors are of relevance to this discussion: i) commercialization, commoditization and ‘massification’ of higher education, and ii) academic mobility. While the impact and intensity of these factors differ from one specific university situation to another, it is plausible to generally discuss them as follows:

Commercialization, commoditization and massification of higher education

With the recognition of information as legal tender, universities are no longer mere repositories, disseminators and creators of knowledge but much more commercial institutions that produce and transact knowledge as a commodity. In the current knowledge-based economy, universities are increasingly running on business models so that university managers are increasingly becoming powerful managers of human resources that produce, store and disseminate knowledge. Hence, for academic staff working in various universities, it is no longer “publish or perish” but “innovate or perish.” Associated with commoditization and commercialization is ‘massification’ of higher education. As with every business, mass production is desired, for it translates to high profits. Thus, the number of students per university is very much on the increase. To support massification of higher education in the global market, diversification of academic programs in terms of structure, methodology and content is required, and of course with information technology, space is no longer an issue. In addition to the traditional programs which involve immigration outside one’s country for purposes of study, the following programs have emerged with internationalization of higher education: sandwich programs, study abroad programs and distance learning.

Academic mobility

Academic mobility has always existed throughout the history of higher education and has been important especially for research and knowledge exchange. However, academic mobility has recently come to be associated with commoditization and sometimes commercialization of higher education. With technological advancements in information and transport, those who produce, package and disseminate knowledge, as well as those who consume it, increasingly move across the global knowledge market. In this context we limit ourselves to two levels of academic mobility: a) student mobility, and b) academic staff mobility. For students, mobility is guided by considerations of quality, cost and length of programs abroad. Over the years study abroad programs are increasingly of shorter and shorter duration (Hay-

ward 2000). For academic staff, mobility is exercised in a search for better environment and in of service, amongst other reasons.

As with all human trends, internationalization of higher education poses specific challenges and prospects. While some challenges are commonly experienced across the globe, others differ from context to context because, although globalization in general and internationalization of higher education in particular is theoretically understood as facilitating competitive markets, the ability and level to which individual countries and individual universities compete is not equal since it is determined by many cultural and historical factors largely related to economic and political power. For institutions of higher learning in Africa, the challenges include: i) quality assurance ii) domination of global knowledge systems by the geographical North, and, iii) brain drain, among others. In this context, we focus on the challenge of quality assurance as an aspect of quality management.

Quality Assurance

Perhaps the greatest challenge of internationalization of higher education common to all institutions, be they in the North or the South, is quality assurance. With globally competitive markets, a lack of quality assurance translates to poor products, inefficiency, loss of clients and consequently poor business. It suffices to explain briefly how the challenge of quality assurance emerges with internationalization of higher education.

As has already been observed, among the major trends of internationalization of higher education is commoditization, massification and sometimes commercialization of education. In Kenya for example, political decisions push university managers to admit more students than the capacity of individual universities in spite of decreased government funding. Thus, some universities in East Africa are forced to seek to admit as many clients as possible, if only to meet their running costs, while others, like business enterprises, seek maximum profit. In the process, quality of education is compromised. A number of factors therefore challenge the quality of teaching:

- The teacher to student ratio rapidly decreases if the number of students in a university class increases without commensurate increase of academic staff.
- Contact between teacher and student is then greatly reduced. While information technology cannot fully replace personal contact and communication, universities with adequate technological facilities such as electronic blackboards, where students can consult with their teachers and vice versa at any time no matter where they are, may find this a minor challenge, but for universities

lacking information technology, such as those in East Africa, reduced contact between teacher and student is a major concern.

- Demand is higher than the supply of quality lecturers, leading to employment of less and less qualified staff to accommodate the huge populations of students. At Moi University for example, while the desired minimum educational qualification of a lecturer is a doctorate, many lecturers are being employed without this to meet the great demand necessitated by huge student populations. Moreover, at Moi University we have more part-time lecture now than ever before as universities seek to hire cheaper labor.
- There is decreasing motivation and commitment to excellence among academic professionals. As universities transform from being public service providers to commercial institutes, university managers are increasingly becoming more powerful than academic staff, and tensions between academic and administrative staff of universities are common. At Moi University, we have the concept and practice of ‘equivalents’ which defines the salary scales of administrative staff in relation to those of academic staff. With this concept, administrators with a bachelors degree share the same salary scale with full professors, by virtue of their standing in administration. In this era of internationalization of higher education, it is the university administrator rather than academic staff who, more often than not, wins. For example, in spite of accusations and threats from the University Academic Staff Union (UASU) and major efforts to do away with “equivalents,” university administrators continue to be “equivalents.” The result is lack of motivation among academic staff and a lot of accusations, counter-accusations, suspicion and threats between the two service providers. Since academic staff is the core service creator, disseminator, packager and in total, provider of knowledge, their occupation of peripheral positions and discouraging remunerations ultimately leads to lack of quality.
- As universities seek to attract more students, either because the government demands it or because they want to maximize profits to cater to university developmental needs, many satellite campuses and collaborating institutions are founded without commensurate hiring of academic staff. The existing staff is therefore strained to provide services in all these campuses with the help of a few part timers. At Moi University for example, over fifteen satellite campuses have been created in the last five years.

The net effect of the above discussed factors is declining quality of education. The tragedy of reducing quality of education in Africa is glaring. A clear high level manifestation of this is the high level of unemployment of university graduates. This calls for development and review of curricula to match the labor market, which implies that universities have to work closely with industries and local communities.

Yet, as these challenges take their toll, internationalization of higher education keeps its pace, demanding quality management for global competitiveness. Hence, as African universities lose on quality, more and more students opt for study abroad or for private universities, most of which are foreign-based or foreign-run. Moreover, as tuition fees in public universities constantly increase to match that of private universities, students are increasingly opting for private universities which have better flexibility, for example where there is provision for a summer semester, which allows students to complete their studies faster. To counter this, high level university managers seek to introduce quality management in their institutions. In an already tense environment, this leads to suspicions among academic staff that the administrators are out to harass, frustrate and kick some of them out of the institutions.

While the above described scenario seems to suggest a grim future for African universities, the truth is rather that there are enormous opportunities for positive change and growth. Within the East African region, within which Moi University, the focus of this paper, falls, there is the Inter-university Council for East Africa (IUCEA), whose mandate is to facilitate “...contact between the universities of East Africa, providing a forum for discussion on a wide range of academic and other matters relating to higher education, and helping maintain high and comparable academic standards ... coordinate and promote sustainable and competitive development of universities in the region by responding to the challenges facing higher education, and helping universities to contribute to meeting national and regional development needs through its various activities...” (For details see <http://iucea.org/>).

Specific to quality assurance, IUCEA is in the process of developing a Regional Quality Assurance Framework towards building and maintaining high and comparable international academic standards in the East African universities. The IUCEA has been working in this area together with the DAAD since 2006 (Mayunga, Bienefeld, Hansert 2009).

At the national level, the Commission for Higher Education in Kenya (CHE) has implemented major initiatives towards quality assurance in the country. Besides, internationalization of higher education, IUCEA avails African universities various opportunities to learn and work with HE institutions from the North on this challenge of quality management. For example, Kenyan universities can learn from Universities in Germany through publications, such as the one by Mayer and Ziegele (2009) on transformation of higher education in Germany, while such programs as the on-going International Deans’ Course, of which this writer is a proud alumnus, empower young academic managers from African universities to build up and maintain quality education in their universities for greater competitiveness.

In the proceeding session, I share a personal experience on facilitating attitudinal change among academic staff at Moi University for smooth implementation of quality assurance.

Sharing a Personal Story

In 2005 Moi University embarked on the development and implementation of its current strategic plan (Moi University 2005). One of the recommendations of the plan was the merger of related academic departments with the basic objective of reducing administrative costs. Within the School of Arts and Social Sciences (SASS, previously called the School of Social Cultural and Development Studies), a reduction of twelve to eight academic departments was proposed. In line with the plan, my Department of Religious Studies was merged with that of Philosophy. As members of the staff, we debated on what was happening and speculated on what the objective of these changes were. We concluded that this was a move by university administrators to cut down on academic staff. This seemed true especially because these changes were coming soon after a wave of retrenchment of non-teaching staff in the university.

We hypothesized that in due course, certain degree programs and courses were going to be scrapped or integrated, reducing the teaching workload and consequently reducing the need for academic staff. We conspired to resist and sabotage the proposed change. At the same time that these departmental and school mergers were being proposed, information got to us that there was going to be introduction of performance contracts. Informed by our hypothesis mentioned above, we (mis)understood this to mean that performance contracting was about determining who among the academic staff performs the lowest so that they would be laid off. Indeed, before we could even sign the contracts, the idea of student assessment of staff came up. This, being a new concept for many of us, further entrenched our fears. It seemed to us that students would be used to determine who performs and who does not perform.

Given the many loopholes in relying on student assessment to determine academic staff performance, many of us began strategizing on how to resist and sabotage this change. Meanwhile, no official communication explaining the proposed changes was coming to us. Sooner than later, a series of meetings of the University Academic Staff Union (UASU) were called to deliberate on the proposed changes to university operations. I personally attended all the meetings and was vocal on the need to resist this change. UASU resolved that nobody was going to sign the performance contracts or implement student assessment and that departmental meetings would be held to resist mergers.

Meanwhile, the university management was keen to implement part of the strategic plan. It is against this background that to my shock and horror, I was appointed the head of the newly merged Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies. I found myself between a hard rock and the deep blue sea, as the university reminded heads of departments and deans that they are part of university management and therefore could not be part of UASU. Rather, they were to work closely with top university management to implement the mergers, performance contracts and other necessary changes.

Personally, even though I don't remember missing any senate meetings, I did not get clear indication of the rationale and objective for introduction of the changes, but it was clear to me that onus was on me as head of department to ensure smooth running of the new department. I took it upon myself, partly for purposes of spying for UASU, to visit some senior management offices to seek clarifications on the changes that we were being asked to implement. The officers that I consulted did not seem clear on the objectives of the change and simply pointed to it as "orders from above." In this context I understood 'above' to mean "Ministry of Higher Education."

Meanwhile, I was having a difficult time managing academic staff in my department who were out to sabotage the merger of departments. Former heads of the Department of Religious Studies and Department of Philosophy were especially uncooperative and so were members of the former Department of Philosophy who interpreted the merger and my appointment as head of department to mean that philosophy was subordinate to religious studies. I counted myself in the right position at the wrong time and contemplated resigning from the position. When I consulted with my academic mentors from other public universities in Kenya, most of them strongly urged me to keep the position and relax, as the situation would settle. One of them thankfully sent me a book on good leadership, which I literally used as a manual and treasure it to date.

While the encouragement from my mentors was very helpful, neither this nor the book on good leadership solved my problem. The reality is that every day I would go to the office to pose as a university manager while deep in my heart I knew I was with UASU in resisting and sabotaging change. For a while, I survived by playing the dualistic roles.

The turning point came when I got the privilege of participating in the International Deans' Course (IDC) organized for young academic university managers. It was in the course of this training that I came to clearly understand what the changes in my university were, where they were coming from, what they were intended for and why they were necessary. This was for this writer an eye opener on internationali-

zation of higher education. As we went through each of the modules of the IDC, my wish was that I could have all my colleagues, including UASU leadership to go through the IDC and understand that the changes in higher education were not happening in our university alone, but all over the world. As far as quality management is concerned, whether in personal, private or public life, the IDC is indisputably the most empowering experience that I have ever had.

One of the take-home assignments was to implement a Project Action Plan (PAP) that I developed in the course towards addressing some of the challenges of higher education in my university. The PAP was titled Enhancing Ownership of Change in Higher Education for Quality Assurance. In the proceeding paragraphs, I share the various components of my PAP in view of my reflection on key learning outcomes.

Key Learning Outcomes

The following were my key learning outcomes of the International Deans' Course:

- Changes taking place in my university are not unique. There are reforms in the higher education sector all over the world.
- These changes are necessary because of the changing environment within which higher education is developing and taking place.
- With globalization driven by information technology, access to global markets for higher education is characterized by competition. For effective competition, universities within their local catchment's areas as well as internationally have to ensure that people all over the world are aware of the services that they provide, they have clear procedures on how they provide the services and that the quality of the services is high. Hence, quality management is absolutely necessary.
- Leadership in quality is necessary if all levels of universities are to be effective. This is demonstrated not just in managerial skills, but also in aspects of professional skills: accounting, presentation, conflict management, communication and conducting meetings. Social and soft skills as in interpersonal relations are also important in quality leadership. For example, it is important to 'catch' staff doing the right thing and praise them for it.
- The styles of leadership are changing from autocratic to democratic with a lot of decentralization. The adoption of Responsibility Based Management (RBM) by Moi University, for example, illustrates such change. This style gives autonomy to heads and deans, making it necessary for them to have appropriate leadership skills in all aspects.

- Things don't just work out. It is important for managers at various levels to strategically plan, implement and manage the plans.
- The process of strategic planning and management must be owned by a significant number of staff for effective implementation.

In view of these learning outcomes, I reflected on the key management challenges among academic staff in Moi University and more specifically in my department and identified the following needs:

- Poor flow of information leading to communication breakdown.
- Lack of motivation leading to lack of commitment.
- Resistance to change.
- Conflicts
- Unnecessary delays due to limiting procedures in acquisition of required equipment and services within the University. Staff then wastes a lot of time and energy 'chasing.'

The IDC was useful in addressing all these challenges, at least at the departmental and school levels, except for the challenge of unnecessary delays due to procedures in acquisition of required equipment and services within the university, which is beyond deans and heads of department.

I realized that I could address most of the above mentioned challenges without major decisions out of my personal realm as head of department within the time-frame of the IDC.

Personal Goal of PAP

Between the end of the first IDC in May 2007 and February 2008, when the second part of the deans' course was due, I planned to see academic staff within the School of Arts and Social Sciences at Moi University, and more specifically within the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, appreciate and own some changes in higher education. I envisaged that this would translate into reduced conflicts, positive attitude towards performance contracting and enhanced motivation to deliver quality services in teaching, research and extension. I identified the following five indicators as measurements of my success towards this goal:

- Acceptance of the implementation of student assessment tools in the department.
- Development of personal action plans by at least 30 % of academic staff in the school.

- Appreciation of performance contracts as primary tools for personal assessment, for self improvement and realization, rather than as punitive tools for use by management.
- Increased interest in international partnerships, which translates into more planned activities and competitiveness within existing partnerships between the school and other universities within and outside Africa.
- Change focus by the University Academic Staff Union (UASU) to issues of performance, benchmarking, best practices and quality control. The agenda of UASU meetings in the next six months would indicate this.

Motivation Cross Check

The above mentioned goal was important to me because my personal assessment of the situation in the School of Arts & Social Sciences at Moi University, and more specifically in my Department, is that we have high quality staff who have a lot of potential to deliver high quality services in teaching, research and extension, but they have not exploited this potential. This is essentially because they have not adapted to changes in higher education because they perceive them as unnecessary, undesirable, and forced. So they resist them. I know this because, even after my appointment as head of department, I was one of the members who saw change as unnecessary, undesirable and forced down our throats. Without the IDC, I would most probably have continued to resist change.

The attainment of this goal requires and involves change of attitude. Change of attitude is definitely the first step to changing my school and equipping it to lead the other schools at Moi University in responding to and facilitating necessary change, thus leading to improved service delivery and quality assurance. This particular objective was meaningful to me as a person and as the then head of department because I believed in the potential of our school as a leader in transforming our university into a center of excellence, especially because experience indicates that at Moi University, ‘SASS leads and others follow.’ In my endeavour to achieve the aforementioned goal, I found it necessary to identify what were likely to be sources of resistance and of support.

Resistance and Support

Chief among the issues that I envisaged as likely to constrain my achievement of this goal is the very challenge of resistance to change. Being head of my department was definitely going to work against my objective, since I would be ‘othernised’ by

my colleagues to be perceived as one of the university managers out to enforce change. In other words, some people would associate my change of position from being ‘a resister of change’ to being ‘a driver of change’ with my appointment as head of department, hence conformity to the whims of management and use of this to mobilize resistance to the changes that I would be proposing.

A good compromise, which I applied, was to give up running for deanship when the time for new appointments came. Many of my colleagues were expecting me to run for this position, and, although I really desired to, I did not. I also had to give up some other personal goals to pursue this goal. For example, I had to give my personal time to casual discussions with colleagues and to UASU officials in order to lobby and advocate for desirable and necessary change. Three reasons made me compromise my ambitions:

1. The higher one is in university managerial status, the more one is associated with university management and isolated by colleagues as ‘one against us,’ rather than ‘one of us.’
2. The higher one is in management, the less available one is for pursuing personal objectives of this kind and implementing personal action plans with a bottom-up approach.
3. I had a better opportunity to influence the school by influencing the department first. There is continuity in remaining head of department at, which level I could implement my PAP.

Yet, in spite of the constraints I anticipated, I indeed got a lot of support from my department, where I had over 80% support. Within the school, I had the support of a large number of staff, who were my peers and were keen to develop themselves. Most of these consulted me on academic research, writing and publications. I had a lot of good will from colleagues in the school, and this is what I primarily used. The large number of DAAD alumni at Moi University and in our school was a great blessing that I counted on.

My approach was both ‘bottom-up’ and vice versa in order to counter the impression that university managers force undesirable change. Once people see the need for change and appreciate it, one has no need to ask them to take it up. They will, out of their own volition. I also had support from the dean and from a significant number of heads of departments. Through the ‘Committee of Heads’ meetings, I harnessed support towards positive change in the school.

Outside the school, I had the support of senior university management, who I strategically approached for technical support towards certain ends. They did not disappoint me. Outside the university I had and continue to increase my networks and

partnerships, which are helpful towards my objective. For example, through a partnership with Indiana University Purdue University, Indianapolis (IUPUI), we planned for a workshop on quality assurance at Moi University in March 2008.

Desire for professional success seemed to motivate many of my colleagues, especially young scholars in the school to listen to me and adopt my recommendations. I took time to explain the personal benefits of embracing necessary change, and it would seem that my confident expression that embracing change would ultimately lead to development of individual lives in their personal public and private lives made all the difference. Indeed, personal gain is universally the major motivation factor for most human endeavours.

But in spite of these areas of support, a well-planned strategy was important in achieving my set goal. I had developed a step-by-step strategy on how to achieve specific objectives towards my goal. Carefully reflecting on sequencing, I had defined detectable activities and milestones up to the end of January 2008 in order to be within the IDC timeframe. I identified what internal and external resources I needed that I could realistically get in time.

External Support and Coaching

It is easy to give up on one's goal, especially if the constraints are beyond expectations. To ensure that I did not give up on my goal, and that I kept to my PAP, I sought and received encouragement from external expert competencies. Moreover, through e-mail communications, I shared my progress in terms of frustrations and challenges as well as successes and pleasant surprises with some of my colleagues in the IDC.

The second part of the IDC presented an opportunity to meet physically and share with colleagues. While I appreciate the enormous benefits of information technology, person-to-person communication remains for me the most effective means of communication. Of course it would have been better to meet the entire group as we were in Germany because some of the peers I bonded best with were not present at the second part of IDC, but I do appreciate that in life we do not always get what we want. Fortunately, I got the technical expertise that I needed to keep going. I wish to make special mention of two experts: Naomi Shitemi and Peter Mayer, from whom I received adequate mentorship and companionship. Fortunately, Naomi was physically available for me throughout the PAP period and others were accessible electronically. The most vivid inspirational talk that I remember from the IDC was by Peter Mayer sharing on his own challenges at FH Osnabrück and how he

faced them. I continued to draw inspiration from and implement many of the things I learned and unlearned in the first part of the IDC.

Assessment of the PAP

It is important to establish whether what I planned in my PAP was achieved. Milestone A of my PAP was creation of awareness and sharing of the learning outcomes of the IDC's initial phase, especially on higher education reforms as a global phenomenon. This was achieved beyond my expectations. I effectively communicated back to the university at all levels on the IDC and its impacts. Written reports and minutes of meetings are available as university documentations of this success, while personal e-mail communications and diary notes are private documentations. The success was exceptionally felt at the departmental level. At some point, I was pleasantly surprised when members of teaching staff requested for templates of student assessment forms to implement in their various courses. By the end of the 2006/2007 academic year in August, the stage was well set for implementation of quality assurance strategies in the department.

In the second phase of my PAP, I planned to engage in various activities in order to create awareness on the necessity of change to individual faculty development. This entailed discussions with individual academic staff, UASU leadership and the offices of DVC (R&E) and DVC (P&D). These were successfully held. To my advantage, the university had at the same time embarked on the process of ISO certification with all the accompanying components of quality assurance and management. I was appointed one of the facilitators of the first ever quality assurance workshop for the senate, the decision-making organ of the university held in Kisumu, Kenya, between 16th and 18th June 2008. The objective of the workshop was to "develop quality assurance policy to govern the operations of each department and unit of Moi University" (Moi University 2008).

Milestone B was measured by receiving support of the DVC (R&E) and development of a concept paper on quality management and another on Aluka digital. Once again, this milestone was achieved beyond expectation. I not only got support of DVC (P&D) but also of DVC (R&E) towards the development of the Moi University quality assurance policy. The concept paper on Aluka digital was not achieved."

In the third phase of my PAP, I had hoped to increase awareness on the need and desirability of change and to train thirty members of academic staff on quality assurance. While most of the activities of the phase were achieved, two were not, for various reasons outside my control. The plan to have Peter Mayer give a public lecture at Moi University did not work because he was not available over the dates

we proposed. The plan to have the Association of African Universities (AAU)-QA workshop to train thirty participants in November was postponed to 2008 because of poor timing: Campaigns for 2007 national elections were at the peak.

While awareness on the need and desirability of change was greatly enhanced, the training of participants was not achieved as scheduled, but it was successfully done later in 2008. Official letters, minutes of meetings, and completed student assessment forms are available documentations of this success.

The last phase was geared towards putting SASS in the leading role to higher education reforms at Moi University with respect to quality assurance. Some of the activities of this phase were not achieved because of the unprecedented 2007/08 post election violence, which rocked Kenya. The impact of this violence pushed me to take sabbatical leave away from Kenya. Interestingly, the process continued first and foremost because members of the SASS had already owned the process, and therefore my absence was largely inconsequential. Moreover, Naomi Shitemi who was my mentor and co-partner in the implementation of my PAP, carried the process through.

Achievement of the last milestone, Milestone D, was to be marked by enhanced ownership of change in the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Moi University. Once again, this milestone has been achieved beyond expectation. As I write this, Moi University, and specifically SASS, has been piloted in QA in the East Africa region under two programs, one driven by a collaboration of DAAD and IUCEA and the other driven by three East Africa peer institutions under the coordination of a Spanish university, the German Accreditation Council, IUCEA and AAU. Service units and academic programs have been subjected to self assessment procedures and improvement action plans developed for the enhancement of quality (for details, see: <http://afriqunits.org/>).

Conclusion

Things don't just work out. It is important for managers at various levels to strategically plan, implement and manage plans. This writer did not wake up one day and turn from being a major opponent of reforms in her university to being a driver of these reforms. It took strategic planning, implementation and management by the organizers of the IDC, operating many miles away from this writer with absolutely no knowledge by this beneficiary. Nothing illustrates this better than sharing my personal story.

In sharing this story, I present five of what I consider the major constraints to embracement of change in higher education:

- Poor flow of information/communication breakdown,
- Lack of commitment/motivation of academic staff,
- Resistance to change,
- Conflicts, and
- Unnecessary delays/procedures in acquisition of required equipment and services within the university.

While these factors are so heavily interrelated that the situation may appear complex and insurmountable, most of the challenges can be addressed easily by low level university managers like deans and heads of department with a lot of success.

The overarching challenge constraining change in many universities in East Africa, as in the case of Moi University, is poor attitude to change. This can be dramatically transformed to enthusiasm for change, as has happened in the case of Moi University. However, this requires local, national and international collaboration. The IDC which initially triggered the change in the SASS was an intentional initiative. It took various institutions to come together and strategically plan, implement and manage the course. At the local Moi University level, mentorship and companionship by Naomi Shitemi made all the difference. It is almost certain to this writer that success of the magnitude that we experience at Moi University in terms of quality assurance would not have been achieved without these collaborations.

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