

The Special Advisory Committee on Universities
Briefing with the Cabinet Secretary
October 25, 2016

1. Introduction

The Committee has visited some of the Campuses under its mandate and found that the quality of learning and standards of physical facilities in most of these Campuses was generally unacceptable. Most particularly Campuses lack the right quality of staff, and the staff/student ratios are poor. The Committee appreciates the recommendations of the Commission for University Education (CUE) in its Technical Inspection Reports on the Campuses.

2. Status on Compliance by the three Universities' Campuses under the Committee's Mandate:

- i. ***Kisii University:*** The Committee advised the Council to rationalize its Campuses. In their Road Map the University resolved to close six (6) Campuses (Isebania, Kehancha, Eldama Ravine, Keroka, Nyamira and Ogembo) and retain four (4) (Migori, Kabarnet, Eldoret and Kapenguria).

The Committee advised the University stop further admission of new students for the Campuses identified for closure. The rationalization plan entails the transfer of approximately 400 students from Isebania and Kehancha will be moved to Migori Campus, 600 from Keroka, Nyamira and Ogembo to the main Campus, and approximately 200 from Eldama Ravine to Kabarnet Campus.

The Committee found that the University was running too many programmes, some of which had not been accredited by CUE, and recommended that the programmes be reduced to sustainable levels. A rationalisation of programmes offered at the Campuses is being implemented – for example both Eldoret and Migori Campuses have reduced the programmes offered to four (4), in each case.

- ii. ***Kabarak University:*** The Nairobi Campus was not operating as a single spatial unit and the Committee advised the University to consolidate its operations to one location.

The University has relocated the Campus to one building as per the Road Map. The Committee visited the new building and observed that further improvements need to be done on that building, for example, the provision of emergency exits at the library and the building.

- iii. ***Laikipia University:*** The Committee worked with the Laikipia University Council in developing its Road Map which entailed addressing the concerns raised by CUE on Nyahururu Campus. In the course of implementing the Road Map, the Council realized that it was not viable to operate this Campus. It has

resolved to close it with effect from 1st January 2017, together with five (5) other Campuses (Nairobi, Naivasha, Eldoret, Embu and Maralal).

3. **Governance and Management of Kisii University**

All organs of Governance and Management manifest a lack of capacity to carry out their mandates.

i. Chancellor: It was evident from the beginning that the involvement of the Chancellor in the affairs of the University was marginal.

The Committee has advised that, beyond his titular role, he must be involved in advisory and visitation. Broad decisions such as the award of degrees and the establishment of Campuses require his input.

ii. University Council: The capacity of the Council to provide oversight to the University Management Board is weak. For example, key policy decisions, such as the establishment of Campuses, appeared to have been made without the knowledge of the Council.

Recommendation: Capacity building for the Council is needed and during the composition of Councils, it is important to take into account the requisite expertise as well as complementarity of skills of the Chairman and individual Council Members.

iii. University Management Board: In its interactions with the University, the Committee did not see evidence of the Board's corporate involvement in decision making. The University has made a number of changes to key personnel in the recent past (the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic and Student Affairs, Registrar, Academic and Student Affairs, and Quality and Standards were relieved of their duties).

iv. Senate: The Committee observed that Directors and Deans, as representatives of the Senate are not well versed with how academic programmes are run, for example, deans were not involved in advising on the number of slots available for any particular class.

The Committee recommends the urgent training of Senate on governance and management.

The Committee further recommends faculty peer learning as a mode of strengthening the capacity of the Senate. For example, Deans should exercise their role in determining what is taught, how it is taught, who teaches and who is taught.

The Committee has observed that some Universities shine at infancy but have, with time, been weakening, instead of maturing into strong credible institutions. The absence of individuals that are strong university pillars/ faculty anchor pillars (professors) who nurture the Universities into full maturity may be contributing to this.

University leadership needs to creatively integrate a critical resource of professors who help in nurturing the vision and growth the university.

4. **Key Pending Issues on Kisii University's Compliance:** The Committee continues to work closely with the Council and Management of Kisii University but is concerned that there are yet a number of issues that could affect full compliance.

i. **The Advisory Committee has interrogated the quality and appropriateness of academic staff and staff/student ratios in the Campuses identified for closure.** For example, in the Eldoret Campus of Kisii University, the School of Business and Economics has 78 PhD students but only 2 PhD holders as staff. These 2 staff also teach the 266 Masters Students. The explanation that was given was that the gaps are filled by either having Masters Degree holders teaching PhD and Masters Students or by part time lecturers. The lack of faculty staff at the Campuses puts to question the quality of learning in these institutions.

The Advisory Committee has recommended that University Campuses carve niches in specific areas where they have comparative advantages and concentrate on developing those specific programmes, as well as, attracting, recruiting and retaining the programme-appropriate qualified staff.

The Committee has asked the University to demonstrate real progress in this area at the end of the August-October Reporting Quarter.

ii. **Changes in strategy in implementation of the Road Map may delay progress.** Eldoret Campus – Eldoret Campus operates in two buildings, which violate the Standard of a single spatial unit. Under its Road Map, the University was to relocate the campus to a new building (Kerio Valley Authority Building) in which it would address all concerns raised on the Campus.

During our visit to Kisii University in September, the University indicated that it would not relocate but would instead consolidate the Campus activities in Tarita Center and improve the building to meet the specified CUE Standards, and at the same time close down Sugar Land. The suitability of Talita Center is still questionable given that it is located in the proximity of a bus terminus, which is a noisy environment that is not conducive for learning.

The Committee has planned a further visit to Eldoret Campus to assess the improvements to Tarita Center.

In the case of Migori Campus, whereas the Campus is now in a new facility, the noise from a neighboring *jua kali* yard, singlehandedly affects learning and yet suggested mitigation measures to address this noise are yet to be realized.

*The Committee has advised that the University liaises with the County Government for purposes of relocating the *jua kali* yard.*

5. **Relationship between Universities and CUE:** The Committee has observed that:
- i. There is a problem in relationships between CUE and universities. There is limited appreciation by the Universities on the role of CUE.
 - ii. Universities flout CUE Standards and Regulations with impunity.
 - iii. CUE's approach in compliance is punitive and their interventions come too late in the day resulting to conflict between Universities and CUE.
 - iv. There is not continuous engagement between Universities and CUE. Universities have not integrated consultation with CUE, as a partner, in matters concerning Standards, such as, the establishment of campuses, mounting of programmes and requisite faculty staff, among others.

CUE should endeavor to cultivate mutual respect and cordial working relationships with all universities. Over and above ensuring that Standards are met, CUE should seek to advise and guide the universities as a partner that is interested in the realization of Universities' visions.

6. **Commercialisation of Campuses:** The Committee has observed that Campuses are established mainly for commercial purposes. This has compromised the basic function of a University of fostering education, learning and research.

The Committee is cognizant of both the need to access of University education and for public Universities to supplement their sources of funds. However, this must not compromise the quality of learning. In future the establishment of Campuses must adhere to the relevant legal provisions.

***Restoration of Quality in Campuses:** Because the quality of learning in most Campuses has been compromised, there is need for restorative measures that will set them on the right trajectory.*

7. **Compliance:** The legal, policy and regulatory framework for universities is quite exhaustive but Universities' compliance remains low. The Committee has recommended the setting up in-house legal and quality assurance and enhancement offices, to deal with regulatory and compliance, for those universities that do not already have them. These offices would also bring to the fore other extraneous concerns that compromise on optimal university management and are not necessarily contained in the main statutes.

Conclusion: The Committee will continue with the close consultations with the Councils and Management of the affected universities as per its Terms of Reference. The Committee will also commit more time over remaining period of its tenure in addressing the more system-wide issues of concern in the country's university education as per the terms of Reference.