



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE REALM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Presenter



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Introduction

In trying to live up to the Stakeholders expectations, Higher Education leadership are confronted with huge challenges which they must grapple with.

Most significant challenges centre around navigating complex administrative structures, addressing diverse stakeholder needs, managing budgetary constraints, evolving educational paradigms amidst responding to competing tensions and remaining relevant.

Introduction

- Higher Education Institutions must adapt to environmental changes, embrace diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Despite the challenges, there are opportunities which should be tapped into. Higher Institutions to be loud and clear about the space they occupy in society: centre of Knowledge (Teaching and Learning), research, a Community of scholars engaged in the task of seeking truth (Karl Jaspers, 1946), a city of intellect (Clark Kerr, 1963) (quoted in Peter MC Caffery (2019))

Introduction

- Challenges and opportunities in Leadership within the realm of higher Education are quite diverse and can have a significant impact on the success and effectiveness of higher Education Institutions.
- This presentation aims to outline Key Challenges and opportunities and insights on strategies that can be adopted to foster effectiveness and sustainability of educational Institutions.



Key Challenges

Role of University/ University Values

- What do we stand for?
- What do we want to be known for? How unique is my University from others?
Duplication of Programme?
- What do the stakeholders expect of us as a University?

Key Challenges

Teaching and Learning

- The Challenges of leadership in the 21st Century include moving away from traditional concepts, adapting to remote work, embracing diversity
- Embracing new information age- lifelong learning
- E-learning, home campuses
- Move away from the conventional learning environment and complete assessment as dictated by the Semester duration
- Universities will need to establish a learning environment which is broader and more holistic in scope to one which students are able to tap a wide range of resources of time and space

Key Challenges

- **Graduate employability:** asked of what students expect of a University, the answer was to provide skills for life-Changing opportunities that will make them employable and suitable for future job market that calls for a deliberate effort to design relevant curriculum by engaging stakeholders in the job market the recent NCHE Exhibition in Mbale theme was fostering Graduate Employability and Innovation

Key Challenges

Enhancing the student experience

- Strengthen 'customer care'
- Broaden student access and support services
- Promote Student guild activities
- Student participation in University Management Organs e.g. University Council and Senate

Key Challenges

Funding

- Resources (financial) are never enough. We are aware of the limitations of Government funding, even the fees collected from the students (NTR) is not paid back in time. Yet there is always pressure from students and other stakeholders for service delivery. The challenge is 'how to do more with less' while still maintaining quality in an ever-increasing competitive environment.
- Fees review in relation to unit cost of the student
- Diversifying income and how?
- Higher education Institutions have continued to depend on tuition as a major source of income, which cannot sustain infrastructure development.



Key Challenges

Student enrolment

- Fees structure
- Low income groups especially rural based Universities
- Student scholarships/ Bursaries
- Government student loans
- The cost of higher education has been steadily increasing making it difficult for many students to afford the tuition. There are many cases of student drop out

Key Challenges

Marketing

- With increasing number of higher education Institutions, there is high competition to attract students, staff and funding. Institutions must differentiate themselves to stay competitive.
- This can be done through market positioning, brand identity, strategic communication and reputation management, collaboration, mergers, marketable Academic programmes.



Key Challenges

Infrastructure Development

- Lecture space
- Laboratories and workshops
- Modern libraries
- Computer access
- These are basic requirements for Higher Education and most Universities are struggling. These require huge funding

Key Challenges

Governance structures

- There should be functional University Organs;
- University Council
- University Senate
- Faculty Boards
- Departmental Committees
- Quality Assurance Units
- Policies: Examples include Strategic plans, Human Resource Manuals, Public Finance Management Act, Academic Policy and Examinations Regulations, etc.
- **Staff and students should be represented on the Governance Organs to enable them participate in decision making.**

Key Challenges

Staffing gaps

- Inadequate staffing especially Senior Academic Staff. Through the Staff development schemes, some junior staff may be trained i.e. home grown. For rural based Universities like Kabale, it has proved difficult to attract Senior Academic Staff.
- There are issues of staff turn-over and absenteeism. Important to note is that the proportion of staff with PhD is small.
- Institutions should make a deliberate effort to sponsor some staff every year. Kabale University is currently at 44% of PhD holders to the existing staff



Key Challenges

Management of Research and Innovations

- Support and promotion of Research and Innovation is central to the University mandate. So, there must be deliberate effort to secure adequate funding for this.
- There is exponential increase of Universities with little or no research capacity. Due to budgetary constraints, higher education Institutions have continued to allocate less than 1% of their budget as expected.



Key Challenges

Community Engagement

- This is another central aspect of the University mandate. How much attention and resources are allocated to this? This is an area that must be given much attention. How relevant is the University to the Community around the University?
- Universities need to renew their sense of purpose, reconnect with their local communities and constituencies and reassert their values and beliefs. Universities need to be loud and proud, should take interest in the societal needs of the Communities around us as Universities. Are we relevant to them to solve their problems e.g. landslides, water and Sanitation, garbage collection management in Kabale.
- The new ideas and knowledge generated at the University should be applied to provide solutions to societal problems.



Key Challenges

Accountability and Assessment

- Quality Assurance. Ensuring quality in higher education remains a challenge in Uganda. Issues such as outdated curricula, inadequate teaching resources, and lack of qualified faculty members can affect the quality of education provided by institutions.
- Meeting students' expectations. Leaders are increasingly held accountable for student outcomes, requiring robust assessment and student completion of his /her course of study



Key Challenges

Technological Integration

- Keeping abreast with rapid technological advancement and integrating them into educational experience may pose a challenge to leaders. They should ensure that technology enhances rather than detracting learning.



Key Challenges

Navigating Regulatory Environment

- Compliance with regulatory requirements and accreditation standards can be complex and time consuming. This requires leaders to stay informed and ensure adherence to various regulations.



Key Challenges

Diversity and inclusion

- Ensuring a diverse and inclusive environment on Campus can be a challenge for many Institutions with issues related to access, equity, and representation. This needs constant attention and improvement by the leadership of the University.
- institutional Leadership is not vested in a single person (the CEO) rather, it is distributed at all levels of the organization. In a University setting, there are Heads of Departments, and Faculty Deans.
- At Departmental level, there are Committees responsible for the different tasks, for example Teaching Timetable Committees, Exams Committees, Research Committees etc. these feed into the Faculty Boards and eventually the University Senate or University Council, as the case may be.

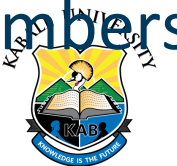


Key Challenges

- This arrangement takes care of the inclusion in decision making and in the management of the Institution.
- In other words, to deal with issues and challenges facing higher Education Institutions, building and maintaining teams is necessary

Brain Drain

- Uganda experiences a significant brain drain, with many qualified academics and professionals leaving the country in search of better opportunities abroad.
- This poses a challenge for higher education leaders in retaining skilled faculty members and researchers.



Opportunities

Amidst the long list of challenges that may be faced by Leaders in higher Education Institutions, there are opportunities to be exploited.



Opportunities

Innovation and Change:

- Higher Education is progressively evolving, providing leaders with opportunities to drive innovation in methods of teaching, technologies and programmes to enhance the learning experience.

Opportunities

Building a diverse and inclusive community.

- Leaders have the chance to create an inclusive and diverse Campus environment that promote a sense of belonging, respect and understanding among students and staff.
- Leadership in Ugandan higher education can play a crucial role in promoting diversity and inclusivity on campuses.
- This includes ensuring equal access to education for students from different backgrounds and creating a supportive environment for marginalized groups



Opportunities

Global engagement:

- There are opportunities to engage in International partnership and collaborations. Collaboration with other universities, research institutions, and industry players can enhance the quality of education and research in Uganda.
- Leaders can forge partnerships with international universities and organizations to facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity building



Opportunities

Promoting Research, and scholarships:

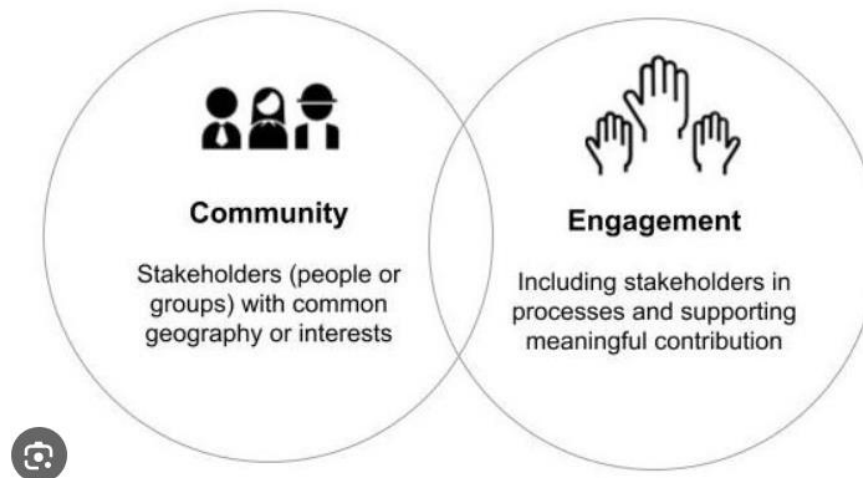
- leaders can support and promote research initiatives that contribute to the advancement of knowledge and innovation.



Opportunities

Community engagement:

- Through outreach activities, leaders have the opportunity to strengthen relationships with local communities and business thus opportunities for collaboration, student placement, public service and Economic Development.



Opportunities

Lifelong learning

- There is a growing demand for life long learning opportunities and higher education Institutions are well placed to offer continuing education programmes, on line courses and professional development opportunities to a wider audience.

Opportunities

Staff Development:

- This may include personal study, internal or external course of study. Staff may get support from the University to further their training/ professional development to improve their knowledge and skills for their specific discipline. Staff development may also be through staff exchange programme through the Inter University Council of East Africa.
- Kabale University has had nine staff benefit from this. Staff may also benefit from RUFORUM (Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture). Kabale University using its meagre resources has been able to support 34 staff to PhD level. Others have been supported at Masters level.



Opportunities

Research and Innovation:

- Ugandan higher education institutions have the potential to contribute significantly to research and innovation, particularly in areas relevant to the country's development priorities such as agriculture, healthcare, and technology. Leaders can foster a culture of research and innovation by providing funding and resources for research projects.



Opportunities

Addressing Skills gaps:

- Higher education leaders have the opportunity to tailor academic programs to address the skills gaps in the Ugandan labor market. By offering relevant and practical training, institutions can better prepare students for employment and entrepreneurship

Conclusion

Conclusion

- Addressing these challenges and leveraging the opportunities in Ugandan higher education requires strong and visionary leadership. Leaders must prioritize investment in infrastructure and technology, promote quality assurance mechanisms, foster partnerships, and advocate for increased funding from both government and private sources.
- Additionally, efforts to improve governance, accountability, and inclusivity are essential for the sustainable development of the higher education sector.



References

- Kabale University Strategic plan, 2020/2021- 2024/2025
- Peter McCaffery (2019), The higher Education Manager's Handbook, Routledge, London

A close-up photograph of a wooden pencil with a sharp lead tip, positioned as if it has just finished writing the words "THANK YOU." in a simple, hand-drawn font on a white, slightly textured surface. The pencil is angled from the top right towards the end of the text. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the paper and the wood of the pencil.

THANK YOU.