

Feature Feature

the great university of nairobi and... the shame of Nyayo era

by duncan elly

South of Sahara, North of Limpopo, the University of Nairobi is the best University in Africa. It is the largest city of academic excellence and pinnacle of learning in the region. No wonder the Vice-Chancellor Professor Crispus Kiamba would always prefer calling it the "great University of Nairobi".

It has huge facilities and assets controlled by its various great satellite campuses. In fact, no University in Kenya is like a veritable city with over fifteen thousand student population spread all over six campuses.

The only feature that makes this great institution to be overtaken even by certain youth polytechnics is the shame inflicted on it by effects of the Nyayo era. Corruption by the KANU regime led to the stalling of various direly needed construction projects commonly referred to as the white elephants.

The University of Nairobi administration, is on record for having defended the parallel degree programmes as an avenue for raising income to finance its budgetary deficits alongside completion of these stalled projects. So far, the millennium halls in Chiromo Campus and the

Civil Engineering block in the main campus are the benefactors of this initiative. Work is actually in progress at the Architectural Design and Development Faculty structure in the main campus (A.D.D) and on the Kikuyu campus lecture theatres.

With the advent of parallel degree programmes, the Faculty of Commerce and the Faculty of Law are on record to be the richest Faculties in the university system successively. Though the Faculty of Law has no stalled building at the moment and proudly owns a swimming pool renovated courtesy of the parallel degree programmes.

However, the Faculty of Commerce houses three such white elephants. Students in Lower Kabete campus learn in what I prefer calling wedding halls while the supposed lecture theatre and posh lecturer offices lies in desperation at the freedom corner.

The Library serving the Faculty is an inheritance from the Kenya Institute of Administration and cannot fully seat the faculty. This institution has never normalized its programmes in history because one class must go on long vacation to create accommodation space. Interestingly, the supposed hall of residence that can humbly house over one thousand students lies in a similar shame.

*An Incomplete
library at the
Kikuyu campus*



a string of white elephants at the university

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The Chancellor when visiting Lower Kabete campus, played a populist game by requesting the students to quantify the investment in the projects and to predict the financial requirement for their completion.

I believe this is illogical since the University has student quantity surveyors and should hire qualified quantity surveyors for precision. I also wonder if such records lack in the University financial plans.

An audit of the university financial records in the project period should reveal what happened. If money was "poured", what happened?

A visit to the Chiromo campus sees what should house the department of Mathematics incomplete – where do our mathematicians come from? I believe not under trees as in some primary schools in Africa.

In Kikuyu Campus, potential teachers lack a proper library. Such professionals are being trained in a field of intellectual development of which library facility is an inevitable prerequisite.

It is an open secret that some trainees join and graduate from campus without setting foot in the small library room inherited from the Thogoto College. In a question of months, lecture theatres will never be the education student problem but they might need more because all their needs are not satisfied.

With due respect to the work done, I need to ask on what is a pressing need? Who is responsible for this mess and if there is optimal allocation of resources at the University of Nairobi. <



An incomplete hostel at the lower Kabete campus that can accommodate over 1000 students.