

His Excellency the President, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta as Chancellor of the University of Nairobi pose for pictures with the Chairman of the University Council Mr. B. M. Gecaga (left) and the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. J. N. Karanja.

The University of Nairobi is Born

By Dr. J. N. Karanja
Vice-Chancellor

"It is a momentous day in the life of any nation when its own University is born,"
said President Kenyatta during the inauguration of the University of Nairobi.

No doubt much is expected of universities by society throughout the world today and particularly in the developing world. Development is the key word in Kenya today and increasingly it is being realized that the way to development lies in making the best use of our human resources. Lack of qualified manpower is a more serious constraint on progress than lack of either finance or natural resources. Kenya, therefore, looks to its national University to fill some of the crucial gaps in her manpower needs.

The first forerunner of the University of Nairobi was the Royal Technical College of East Africa, created nearly twenty years ago to provide higher

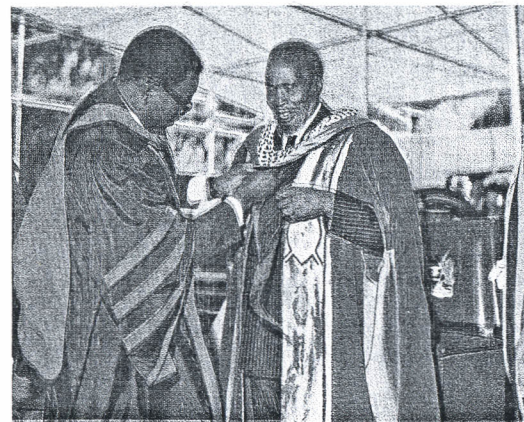
education of a technical nature for what were then the colonial territories of East Africa. In 1954, that institution merged with the Gandhi Memorial Academy and the Royal Technical College was formed on a much broader basis. Seven years later, this college entered into a special relationship with the University of London, and the first students at University level were admitted in October 1961.

The philosophy behind establishment in 1963 of the University of East Africa was the desire to use scarce educational resources available to the three East African countries to the best advantage. With this in mind each of the three constituent colleges, Makerere, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam had, besides

faculties serving the needs of all three East African countries. For example, Makerere had Medicine and Agriculture; Nairobi had Architecture, Engineering and Veterinary Science and Dar es Salaam had Law. Such a system had obvious advantages when the problem of student enrolment was that of filling all available university places. Latterly with the rapid growth amounting almost to an explosion in the number of students qualified for university entrance, the inadequacy of this arrangement became apparent.

Well before they became independent universities, faculties of medicine had been opened in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Similarly, in the past two years the University College, Nairobi, in conjunction with the Kenya Government, had been preparing for the establishment in 1970/71 of its own faculties of Agriculture, Law and Education, so that when the new University of Nairobi starts its life all major academic and professional disciplines are represented.

Earlier last year a diploma in Journalism was also started. In a country such as Kenya, where the potential of the mass media for spreading new ideas and mobilizing the national effort is so great, there is a clear need for well-trained practical journalists, and this development illustrates the new University's readiness to step outside the traditional academic subjects when circumstances indicate a need.



The Vice-Chancellor, Dr. J. N. Karanja attends to Mzee's robes during the inauguration of the University on December 10th. President Kenyatta is escorted after the ceremony by the mace bearer, Mr. Peter Cege who is the Finance Officer at the University.

The procession of academicians and many international dignitaries who travelled many miles to witness the inauguration ceremony.



And the lighter side—

And on the lighter side Mzee cracks a joke with a third year medical student Miss D. M. Waruhiu as Dr. Karanja looks on.



The establishment of the three national Universities in the three member states of the East African Community does not spell the end of East African co-operation in higher education. The Community has already set up the machinery to promote co-ordination in academic development and to establish a measure of uniformity in such matters as staff salaries where competition would serve little useful purpose. This framework will make it easier to introduce new specialization at one university to meet, initially at least, the needs of all.

The Kenya Government's development plan for the period 1970/74 lists those professional and managerial occupations where shortages of qualified Kenyans are expected to persist and consequently where the University of Nairobi has a special responsibility to accelerate its expansion. These include architects, engineers, doctors, accountants and numerous other professions, mainly concentrated in the science-based faculties.

The University's own planning is accordingly based on a more rapid expansion of the Science rather than the Arts faculties.

There will be problems to overcome in implementing this policy. More laboratory places cannot be provided overnight and the limit of existing capacity has now been reached in several science departments; the annual cost of maintaining engineering and science students is high, perhaps three times that of students in Arts; and because of the lead-time in switching the emphasis in the secondary schools, the University is under pressure to increase its Arts intake very rapidly. It will require time to resolve these conflicting factors.

Plans for the new Faculty of Agriculture provide for steady expansion year by year to produce eighty graduates annually by 1980. The degree course is designed to give students not only the basic tools and techniques of agricultural science but also an understanding of agricultural economics and rural sociology, so that after graduating, they will be able to assist in drawing the small-scale farmers, who for years to come will form the majority of Kenya's population, into the modern economy and enable them to share in the nation's progress.

The Faculty of Education will help meet the urgent staffing needs of the rapidly expanding secondary school system. Half of all Arts students now study education as part of their undergraduate course but progress is slower with science students. The new Faculty of Law has started with a modest first year class of under forty students and this number is likely to double by the late 1970s. After their academic course most students are expected to go on to qualify for legal practice. The Faculty of Medicine is progressing well and it is becoming clear, even before the first students graduate in 1972, that the original targets will soon need to be re-examined and raised. Among the older established professional

courses, the Faculties of Engineering and Veterinary Science now have first year classes of nearly 200 and seventy students respectively.

About 450 graduates received their degrees and diplomas last year. In four years' time this number will have more than doubled.

The University is planning a significant expansion programme in research in the next few years. This step is designed partly to contribute directly to the solution of some of the practical problems facing Kenya today, whether in the technical, social, economic and cultural fields, and partly to sustain its own academic vigour.

We are obliged to design a system of education which will help to promote social change and contribute to rapid economic growth, not only by training educated manpower needed for specific tasks of development, but also by creating proper attitudes of mind in our people.

To achieve this the University must make every effort to recruit Kenyans to staff their own University. At the present time only some 40 per cent of the academic staff is East African. No University dependent on overseas support to this extent could feel satisfied or secure. The effort to recruit Kenyans to staff their own University must therefore be intensified in the next few years.

As the President said during the inauguration ceremony, there must be no mutual isolation of the University body and the executive centres of national design and decision. There must be the fullest use of resources within the university, so as to secure the fruits of intellect and technology within the framework of our nationhood.



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