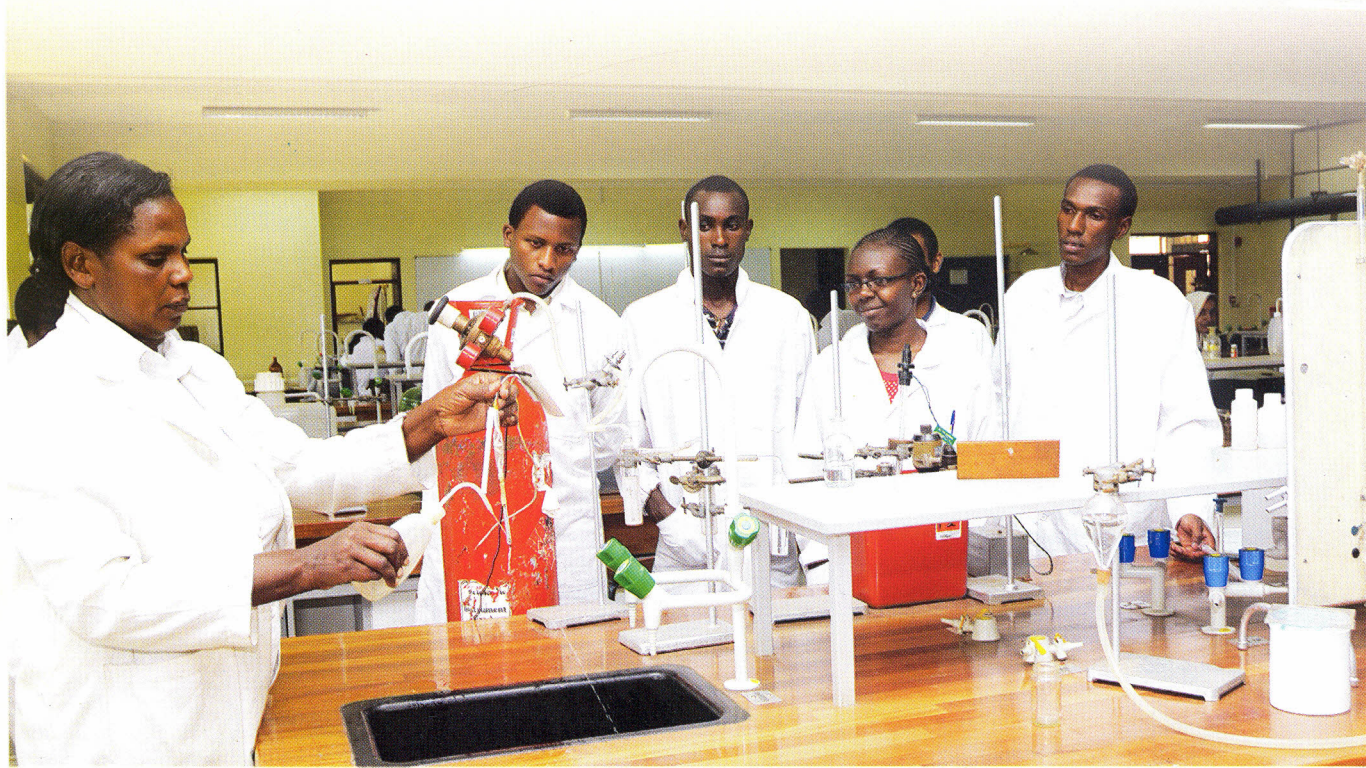


# The role of the university in development



Students acquiring skills in one of the practical lessons at the School of Physical Sciences.

It is named after the capital city of this country yet it represents far much more than a city in terms of its history, diversity of students, programmes and overall contribution to the country and beyond. It has been described as the mother of all public universities in Kenya, pioneer institute of university education or simply the University. Welcome to the University of Nairobi, the largest and oldest institu-

tion of learning in Kenya; an institution that, for ages, has been synonymous with higher education in the country.

As clearly stated in its mission statement, the core business of the University is to provide quality university education and training as well as embody the aspirations of the Kenyan people and the world through creation, integration, transmission and utilization of knowledge. The birth of the University

was as a result of the desire by each of the three East African countries to set up their national universities. This led to the university of East Africa, which was serving the three countries, being dissolved in July 1970 and the University of Nairobi being set up through an Act of parliament.

While it's setting up was largely based on patriotic reasons, it was also based on the desire for capacity building through



the production of high level manpower to spearhead the development of the newly independent country.

The University was also expected to enhance national integration by bringing together students from various parts of the country. Integration was also to be realized through offering diversity of programmes that provided an environment for multi-disciplinary projects.

Being the largest and oldest institution of higher learning in the country, the University of Nairobi has been faced with the challenge and obligation to provide academic leadership. To demonstrate its commitment to fulfill its mandate as reflected in its mission statement, the University has remained focused towards world class excellence in line with its vision.

Over the years, the leadership role has been manifested by the pioneering and diverse programmes it has initiated and the research activities that have been carried out by its rich pool of international scholars.

The UON boasts one of the largest alumni. It has been argued that if the University of Nairobi Alumni were to stop working, then the whole country would come to a standstill. At the moment, the alumni of this premier University are over 100,000 and the number keeps on growing with each graduation ceremony.

The alumni are holding key positions not only in Kenya but also various places in the world. The fact that the alumni have penetrated all sectors and playing key roles means that the University has made tremendous progress in its expected role of providing highly skilled

human resource to the economy.

The University has also developed core values that drive the behaviour of the organization. This is out of the desire for the University to justify its existence and the trust and investment that the public has in it. As Mwalim Nyerere put it "East Africa cannot spend millions of pounds, cannot beg and borrow for the university, unless the university plays a full and active part in the urgent tasks of East Africa. Even if it were desirable, we are too poor in money and educated manpower to support an ivory tower existence for the intellectual elite." He also visualized university members as torch bearers of the society.

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To maintain and extend the leadership role and in order to survive and thrive in a competitive environment, the University has embarked on continuous improvement.

Five years ago, it was realized that conducting business as usual and doing more of the same was not sustainable in a competitive and constantly changing environment. The University therefore embarked on transformative programmes to realign itself to the changing market environment and to realize its determination to offer superior customer service with a view to be the University of Choice within the re-

gion and beyond.

The outcome has been success stories as manifested by ISO 9001: 2008 certification, improved ranking and formulation of several policies among them research policy, intellectual property, Gender and HIV/Aids policy. Other success stories include increased PhD graduates, number of publications, a successfully implemented and entrenched performance management system, and numerous training programmes for all cadres of staff.

Although our role continues to be vital yet difficult (in view of dwindling resources), even after 40 years of prejudice, solvency altitudes and yet impressive innovations, inventions and a wonderful pioneering spirit, the university is proud to celebrate academic excellence, research and community service. We continue to think of the present and future; problems cannot wait and have called for revolutionary ideas from the University. We have consistently won awards from trade fairs and exhibitions. Wonderful and pioneering work is being carried out at our colleges. Perhaps best of all we are home to internationally known scholars- men and women who are outstanding in their respective areas. Aren't we home to the country's one and only Nobel Peace Laureate Prof. Wangari Mathai? Ngugi wa Thiong'o among others - the list is endless and of course you have heard the awards that our students have been winning. Not only have they contributed to positioning our university as a leader but also made us proud to be associated with this premier institution.