

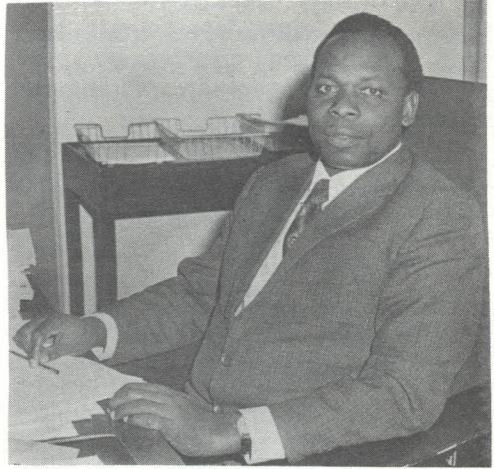
PROFESSOR D. ODHIAMBO SUCCEEDS PROFESSOR J.M. MUNGAI AS NEW DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR

The University has appointed Professor D. Odhiambo as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to succeed Professor J.M. Mungai.

Professor Odhiambo until his new appointment was the Dean of the Faculty of Science. When interviewed on his experience as the former Dean and now as the new Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Odhiambo had the following to say:

Q Professor Odhiambo what would you say is the role of a Faculty after having worked as a Dean for two years?

A faculty is a very important institution in a university because it handles all the academic matters and the faculty members are in daily touch with the students. But more than that because they are better able to assess if there are any problems amongst students since these are often reflected in the academic performance of the students. The Faculty of Science is one of the oldest Faculties in the University and its Departments are well established as teaching and administrative Units with the Dean of the faculty playing only a coordinating role. More recently the Faculty of Science has been thinking out new academic areas to be developed and formed a Faculty Planning Committee for this purpose. The Committee required all the Departments to find



Professor D. Odhiambo

out as far as can be foreseen in the future what various industries and the country as a whole will require in terms of graduates in their respective disciplines, i.e. the number of undergraduates and postgraduates who should be trained in their particular field, and also any new areas in which demands for such personnel will arise. The Faculty Planning Committee has discussed the requirement of each department in order to satisfy itself that the faculties required for such training and research will be available, and on the basis of this will produce the Faculty Development Plan to be approved by the Faculty Board and finally by the Senate.

Do we have a lot of success in employing our students?

It has been a success in most departments but of course graduates in some departments like Mathematics now find it rather difficult to find employment.

What about the Government as an employer?

Most of our graduates get employment with the Government but as a Faculty we have not dealt with the Directorate of Personnel as such. Quite often our departments have been approached directly by prospective employers to recommend suitable candidates.

What about staff development in the Faculty? What is causing the drop of Kenyan staff in the Faculty? Are there fewer graduates than before or are things changing?

First of all there are now more students who can be admitted into the Faculty than in the past and this year's intake is larger than any before, and therefore the number of graduates will also increase and of course employment opportunities have also increased. Various openings such as Kenyatta University College and other research institutions have been recruiting Kenyan Scientific personnel at higher level in competition with the University. We have also not had a vigorous staff development programme so that we have not been able to train sufficient Kenyans specifically for staff positions in the Faculty.

People doing Arts-based subjects can take jobs in the Administration but scientists being specific in their areas, you expect them to sort of stick, What are your views?

There are quite a number of jobs in various organizations which carry more attractive terms for scientists. Thus Faculty members have left the University to take up such posts.

Would you have anything to say on Biological Sciences?

The Faculty has approved a proposal to set up a school of Biological Sciences. At present we have Botany, Zoology, Entomology, as separate departments. These departments have much in common and it was felt that they should be in one school with various sections. Although even now we try and integrate the courses where necessary, the formation of a school of Biological Sciences would greatly facilitate this. We already have the Physical Sciences Building which we are grateful for to the Government and Norad for funding. This will enable the Faculty to undertake an expanded programme of training in the physical sciences and also an increased number of students than present, but only if there is a corresponding increase in accommodation available for Biological Sciences. If this is not done then the Physical Sciences Building will not be used to its maximum capacity.

What would be the initial necessary infrastructure in setting up a Biological Sciences Building?

We would have to add to the present building. We have Botany and Zoology Departments which were planned for about 40 students. Many more students would like to do Biological Sciences if the number of students in the Faculty is increased, hence the need for increased facilities. The Faculty had set up a Committee to plan for a Biological Sciences building and I believe it is one area where perhaps external donors can be interested in so that we do not have a bottleneck in the training of our scientific manpower. NORAD assisted in the building of Physical Science complex.

Do you find that a lot of students who have done science join teaching?

Many of our graduates have in

fact gone to teaching but obviously the supply does not meet the demand. They are still joining teaching although B.Ed. students are expected to be the main source of school science teachers. I hope that many more graduates from the Faculty will opt for teaching. There are those who want to do B.Sc. first and then take the postgraduate diploma in education. In addition we have students who had trained at KSTC who come here to do B.Sc. and thus qualify as fully trained science teachers.

What about the Physical Science Building?

The Building is nice although we have not quite settled down in it. We have more room and facilities than we used to have. On the whole it is nice, much more comfortable. The Science Workshop is very good. It is used by everybody in the University and when it is finally completely equipped I think it will be one of the best workshops in Nairobi.

NEW OFFICE

What do you say about your new office?

I have not been here long enough to be able to give views and therefore I will only have something to say after I have been here for some time.

The little I can say is that the office deals mainly with academic matters through Deans Committee and Senate and the students welfare Committee. Right now we are trying to get a new students' organisation registered. The students welfare committee had gone through the constitution which had been forwarded to the Registrar of Societies and I am hopeful that it will be registered.

Coming back to you as Dean, perhaps you could tell us about your work

Apart from research work, I have

specialised in Physical Chemistry and in Surface Chemistry in particular. Surface Chemistry as the name suggests is chemistry of surfaces of substances. I have worked on Diatomite which is mined near Gilgil which is used as filter and as an absorbent and also as a filler for various preparations. I was doing research in the Department until I became Dean of the Faculty. Since becoming Dean, I was not able to do much research for the first few weeks but then somehow a lot of work began piling in my office as at that time we did not have assistants. When I left being Dean of the Faculty at the end of June, I thought I would go back to more research but then now there is this new post which I am sure is demanding and will take up a lot of time.

You are one of the people who have been here for a long time, 14 years? Why did you choose academic career?

The freedom which is in academic life — I can work until very late. Or come in very early. There is freedom to be oneself. I plan my own programmes. University teaching is also very challenging particularly when one has some good students. Before I came from U.K. in 1960 I had been offered a job by one oil company which I did not accept and I do not regret it.

Coming to students welfare, are students lacking in something the public expects of University students?

I have not dealt with them for long but I think there are areas that need quite a lot of improvement. I think they can look after their own social welfare better, shoulder more responsibilities in running their own halls, and on the whole make the University life academically and socially more lively. I think members of staff too can play greater role in the

stimulating students activities by joining some of their clubs, games, and societies, and generally help create

in the University an atmosphere more congenial for the total development of students potentialities.