

Book Review

Reflections on the Birth of the University of Dodoma, by Idris S.

Kikula

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A historical book on the "Birth of the University of Dodoma" reflects a political decision by the fourth-reign President, H.E. Dr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, and his predecessor, the third-reign President, H.E. the Late Dr. Benjamin William Mkapa, the first University Chancellor. The book has two parts: Part One, with 12 short chapters, and Part Two, with only one chapter. Every chapter has its ideas; Chapter One is the general book introduction. Chapter Two focuses on the etymology of the idea of the giant University by the former fourth president of Tanzania, HE. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, through his party election manifesto (Chama cha Mapinduzi - CCM) of 2005–2010. The rationale for a new university and statistics for student enrolment trend from 2007/2008 to 2014/2015 and historical development of higher education in Tanzania. Chapter Three focuses on the establishment of the University of Dodoma from a political angle, baptizing the University, and modeling the University by appointing a task force of twelve (12) members. Chapter Four focuses on establishing legal documentation and management through chartering, appointing top executives, and establishing rules. Chapter Five illuminates the essential staff and facilities of UDOM, the Chimwaga complex, and its location. Chapter Six narrates the master planning of UDOM and the team of twelve (12) experts who developed the master plan.

Chapter Seven narrates the onset of the bumpy of UDOM. The University started in a horrible state, for example shortage of resources, including human resource and a lack of financial support. There was also criticism for the appointment of the management based on religious backgrounds; disqualification of the University by being equated with a ward-level university; political interference, and bumpy seasons of decisive directives by the former Prime Minister, Hon. Edward Lowassa without immediate unfolding. Chapter Eight presents the narration on the construction of infrastructure like roads, colleges, libraries, student hostels, and other infrastructure. Chapter Nine shows the turbulences during the early days of the University. The author believes that the University's early years were turbulent due to the employment of a sizable pool of tutorial assistants with still-student mentalities. Also, he associates the turbulences with a sizable number of young administrative staff without experience in university management, a sizable number of young students, and the delusion that the University was wealthy.

In chapter Ten, the author explains the failure of university stakeholders to use available instructional management and thenceforth wanted to get the Vice Chancellor in every matter. He has earlier cited on page 71 examples of the Vice President of the students' organisation requesting a release on paying university fees as an immature attempt and ignorance of the university management structures. Chapter Eleven covers the rumor-mongering of some members of university staff, students, and other university stakeholders. The author has cited the deadly car accident with a white truck at midnight on July 14th, 2014. The last chapter in this part is the author's lesson learnt in his administration. Several management lessons from creating teamwork unilateral decisions made by some officers; the tendency for neutral gear syndrome; information sharing culture and resource mobilisation are critical; and one can lead with followers. Bad leaders are not inspirational, and typically, bad leaders have false confidence.

Only one lengthy chapter makes up part two of this book. Narrations in this chapter are in the form of a diary of events and dates of their occurrence. The whole chapter depicts a narration of participatory observation studies. This chapter narrates the crises from 2007 to 2018 at the University of Dodoma. The chapter condemns the students' boycotts, unrest, and staff strikes. The author has consistently identified the struggle for economic well-being among the students and staff, over

expectations of young employed staff on their welfare, government interference, political interventions, and struggle for power. The author indicates the government's regular intervention and scrutiny of university unrest, as the University of Dodoma was a president's baby. This chapter earnestly presents some university staff's gossiping behaviours and the author's fearless readiness to step down as a Vice Chancellor of the University of Dodoma at any time when the authority would ask him to do so.

This book has established a foundation for the birth of the University of Dodoma after 16 years of its existence. It has revamped the academic and administrative discussion on establishing, managing, and developing academic institutions that live beyond average human ages. The book has unfolded the step-by-step process of employing and developing human resources in a newly developed university. Since the University of Dodoma exists, the author has challenged other universities and organisations founders to develop their ideas regarding the birth of their institutions. The author has managed to speak it openly (open-minded leadership) by acknowledging his leadership challenges on his 12-year journey as Chief Executive Officer of the University.

However, the book has severe shortfalls, which warrant academic sanctions and discussion. The author has consistently attributed all failures to other people: the University of Dodoma academic staff; students; the trade unions; the University of Dodoma Academic Association (UDOMASA); and partly the government and the Chama cha Mapinduzi, the ruling party in Tanzania. One can argue that the author needs to balance his id and ego by not acknowledging the support from his colleagues (staff) or admitting his failure as the University's Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Similarly, the author expected to narrate his success and ability to mentor other staff as part of a successful succession plan. In this book, there is neither a single sentence on how the author planned for future success during his tenure nor a narration of a successful academic staff he could admire for leading this grand institution. Documenting his efforts on the succession plan of the University before his retirement is one of the fatal mistakes in this historical book.

Bewilderingly, the author dared to blame and disclose some information and secrets entrusted to him despite his experience in leadership and

seniority on the academic ladder. For instance, on page 98, blaming the visit of two ministers at the University during the unrest, one being the minister of education, raises questions about the author's loyalty and respect for bureaucratic leadership. The author has cited this visit as an unprecedented high-level political intervention in university affairs. In the same way, narrating that the government had an insufficient budget to build the University of Dodoma was far from leadership attributes and code of ethics. Moreover, on page 48, the author narrates that some senior governmental officials did not support the idea of the immediate establishment and start of the University of Dodoma. He cites one senior Permanent Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office who stood up with a high-pitched voice and said: "The University of Dodoma cannot start this year; it is impossible." It is unethical to disclose the status and opinion of any member in all official meetings. It is now effortless to identify the accused senior permanent secretary in the prime minister's office who was an in-charge of the office during the establishment of the University. Although the book is about the birth of the University of Dodoma, the author, as the former chief executive officer, wrote all the chapters. Academically, books present researched ideas and facts rather than personal speculations, opinions, and autographs.

As long as the book is about the birth of an institution, it could sound academic and administrative to involve various academic staff, legislators, the private sector, government, alumni, students, the community, and other research communities to write chapters in this historical book. The current book is more of an autograph, a familiar paradigm in Tanzania today. Many leaders in public offices had authored books after their office as part of their leadership journey and did not represent their institutions as authorities. For example, the third President of Tanzania and the Chancellor of the University of Dodoma, the late H.E. Dr. Benjamini William Mkapa, after his office tenure, wrote a book on his life and leadership experience in public offices (Mkapa, 2019). Similarly, the Second President of Tanzania, H.E. Ali Hassani Mwinyi wrote a book after his tenure as a leader in various government offices (Mwinyi, 2020). The former chairperson of the University of Dodoma Academic Association (UDOMASA) critiqued this book (Loisulie, 2023). After his leadership tenure, he published a paper on his leadership journey, not about the University of Dodoma (Loisulie, 2019). Neither Mwinyi nor Mkapa wrote a book on the institution's or government's behalf, despite their high leadership profiles and ranks.

Lastly, this book has severe allegations and unfounded claims without evidence, which require justifications of refute. Some of the allegations may directly affect the University as the premier respected academic gastronomy, academic staff, or graduates. On page 65, the author intentionally condemned the large pool of tutorial assistants as too young to make the University ungovernable by changing young minds politically. Similarly, on page 72, it is portrayed that one student who was also the Vice Chairperson of students' union needed to be more focused and mature and could not distinguish between the university leadership organogram and that of secondary school. For instance, on page 137, the author declares that he bought two beers and some roast chickens for one leader of the staff assembly, who was then very open and mentioned that the staff were not after him but rather his two deputies. One might be caught in a quagmire since he did not mention the names of such leaders. In the same thinking, on page 47, the author admits that some professors from old universities were referring to the University of Dodoma as a ward-level institution. It is the reality that such students and others portrayed as stubborn and uncivilised who studied at the "ward university" are the employees of various work organizations, and others manage large private and public institutions within and outside Tanzania. Quoting street jokes and nasty sayings about the University of Dodoma in formal and academic writing may have justified those silly sayings and lousy names. More importantly, such claims may revamp and escalate unfounded grievances among the university community.

Documenting unfounded claims and unrated opinions in a book like this by the pioneering leader may be considered truth. Such unverified allegations may harm the current and future growth and sustainability of the University of Dodoma just for the benefit of its history. As a learning institution, universities may live for centuries and beyond the human age. Therefore, proper documentation of the history of the University of Dodoma should consider novelty, integrity, and professionalism. There is a need for the University to document its history to keep proper records. Furthermore, the author has indicated strengths and weaknesses of the University that can be a starting point to improve its core functions while working on the plans to improve areas of the identified weaknesses.

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