

## *Research Africa Reviews* Vol. 2 No. 2, August 2018

These reviews may be found on the *RA Reviews* website at:

<https://sites.duke.edu/researchafrica/ra-reviews/volume-2-issue-2-august-2018/>

Kasozi, A.B.K. *The National Council for Higher Education and the Growth of the University Sub-sector in Uganda, 2002 to 2012*. Publisher: CODESRIA. 378pp. Year: 2016. ISBN: 978-2869787117.

Reviewed by: Joseph Kasule, MISR, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda.

To establish a regulatory agency in institutions of higher learning in Uganda is an extensive process that Professor A.B.K. Kasozi focuses on in his recent publication. *The Uganda National Council for Higher Education and the growth of the university sub-sector in Uganda, 2002 to 2012* is an interesting revelation on the internal dynamics regarding the management of public institutions in Uganda. The book concerns the establishment of the Uganda National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) through the lenses of its founding Executive Director, Professor A.B.K. Kasozi. It reads like a personal experience in the rooms and corridors of the regulating body's management of higher learning in Uganda. Professor A.B.K. Kasozi is the author of multiple related works, however, this book comes as a contribution to the management of education institutions in Uganda. It pairs well alongside his other publications such as *University Education in Uganda: Challenges and Opportunities for Reform* and *Financing Uganda's Public Universities: An Obstacle to Serving the Public Good*, and *The Impact of Governance on Research in Ugandan Universities*.

Professor A.B.K. Kasozi states that the NCHE was established to “manage, supervise, and guide institutions of higher learning in the creation and delivery of quality education”. Two major goals structured the focus of the NCHE. The first goal was to build a fully functioning institutional framework that would become standardized among the sector of higher education in Uganda. The second goal was to establish a schema that would support the generation of knowledge, through research and innovation, to improve higher education in Uganda. Together, these two goals would function as a foundation for general social and economic progress. Unlike other regulatory bodies within the Ministry of Education, the rationale of the NCHE, according to Professor A.B.K. Kasozi, was to focus primarily on higher education.

From Professor Kasozi's first hand experiences and knowledge of the internal workings of the NCHE project, his book provides an amazing insight into the variance between expectations and veracities. This work is organized into three broad sections: the first includes chapters that detail the founding of the NCHE, the second covers the relationship of the NCHE with institutions of higher education in Uganda, and the third delves into the internal management of the NCHE. The author concludes the book with an afterword from Dr. Mouhamad Mpezamihigo, a member of the NCHE secretariat, who validates Professor A.B.K. Kasozi's narrative.

A quick glance reveals the dilemmas of regulatory agencies. In chapter one, Professor A.B.K. Kasozi provides background on the need for a regulatory agency in Uganda.

The economic reformation of the state under the banner of capitalistic accumulation heralded by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) between the late 1980s and early 2000s contributed to the NCHE's founding. According to the author, the prevalence of new economic models that commodified many public goods had also affected education services.

Coupled with the fact that new research correlating economic development with improved quality of higher education, a need for a regulatory agency to guide and balance the market of higher education arose. Protecting the general public from the debilitating effect of profit motives was a large concern in the initial conception of the NCHE. Professor A.B.K. Kasozi states that since its founding, the Council had to deal with "market-driven institutions". Although many providers of higher education services in Uganda tried to give Ugandans "dubious education", the NCHE tried "its best to protect citizens" and warned "managers of institutions of higher learning to be very careful when they introduce the components of the market in their institutions." The conflict for the NCHE was how to implement principles of ethical governance without exhibiting power in the form of controlling the operating environment of higher education in Uganda.

According to the World Bank and IMF-led reforms that Professor A.B.K. Kasozi mentions, the NCHE was required to guide academic institutions already immersed in a capitalistic market environment. While some of the academic entities were "philanthropic," others were "for profit". The NCHE was therefore required to balance the profit motive in the delivery of education. But the privatization of knowledge provision related to a commercializing trend in knowledge production and dissemination that Professor Mahmood Mamdani has extensively demonstrated in his *Scholars in the Market Place*. By Professor A.B.K. Kasozi's own admission, the capitalistic market environment had begun to pervade state institutions and axiomatically turned the public into a commodity, limiting its accessibility to only capable consumers. Particular forms of knowledge critical to individual empowerment and skill advancement became luxuries. Whereas Professor A.B.K. Kasozi's concern was that the profit motive would invade any remaining interstice of service for the public good, the book speaks little about how much power the NCHE had at its disposal to enforce ethical principles. The dynamics of its operating environment, seen in the confrontational character of its relationship with relevant entities, demonstrate the NCHE's limitations.

Chapter two describes the establishment of the NCHE and its secretariat. It details the dilemmas of recruiting experienced staff composed in various committees, the duties and responsibilities of the Executive Director, the internal working dynamics of the members of the secretariat, and the rules of procedure for various functions. The book proceeds to detail the benchmarks part of the quality assurance framework. This served as a standard operating manual for a university model for the NCHE. Professor A.B.K. Kasozi provides some characteristics of a model university but fails to give an overview as to how these traits originated.

The book's major focus, which also marks its greatest contribution, is the description of the politics of managing public institutions in Uganda. The challenges facing agents in the higher education sub-sector are indubitably related to the struggles of other public institutions in other sectors. Where young institutions are denied the tireless

commitment of individuals such as the late Dr. Justus Mugaju, work stagnates and progress becomes minimal. Some of the major challenges facing public universities in Uganda mentioned are limited institutional autonomy, the connection of university finances with state funds, and political interference. The book ties these challenges to the fact that the state is “not only the home of all universities, it is also the social regulator which forms and implements policies that govern universities.”

At an institutional level, the book mentions how personal integrity of staff is the most profound challenge of managing the NCHE. The author includes cases of corruption involving agents in the NCHE secretariat on issues such as the issuance of certificates to equate academic qualifications and the undermining of relevant rules and authorities. Herein lies the flaw in this work; it fails to link such institutional weaknesses with the nature of the state. When the book depicts the managerial style of the NCHE’s Executive Director as a committed public servant locked in a continuous battle with agents desiring commercial gain, it demonstrates that the challenge of progress has always been the integrity of its human resources. As the book rightly states, integrity is the salt of any regulatory agency. This truism speaks to the management of the state more than anything else.

## References

- Kasozi, A.B.K., *The Impact of Governance on Research in Ugandan Universities*, Makerere: MISR Publications, 2017.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The National Council for Higher Education and the Growth of the University Sub-sector in Uganda, 2002 to 2012*, Dakar: CODESRIA, 2016.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The MISR Views on the National Discussion on Makerere University*, Makerere: MISR Publications, 2016.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Financing Uganda’s Public Universities: An Obstacle to Serving the Public Good*, Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *University Education in Uganda: Challenges and Opportunities for Reform*, Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2003.
- Mamdani, Mahmood, *Scholars in the Market Place: the Dilemmas of Neo-Liberal Reform at Makerere University, 1989-2005*, Dakar: CODESRIA, 2007.

## Research Africa

Copyright © 2018 by Research Africa, (research\_africa-editor@duke.edu), all rights reserved. RA allows for copy and redistribution of the material in any medium or format, provided that full and accurate credit is given to the author, the date of publication, and the location of the review on the RA website. You may not distribute the modified material. RA reserves the right to withdraw permission for republication of individual reviews at any time and for any specific case. For any other proposed uses, contact RA’s Editor-in-Chief. The opinions represented in the reviews and published on the RA Reviews website are not necessarily those held by RA and its Review editorial team.