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## THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

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### Abstract

This paper discusses some of the key challenges and points of tension pertaining to leadership in higher education in Kenya. Effective leadership approaches are discussed including the context of why effective leadership is more important in Kenyan public higher education now than ever. The paper considers whether recent changes in higher education in Kenya- notably the increase in student populations; rapid increase in the number of public higher education institutions; major changes in the labour market and the steady reduction in the funding of public higher education institutions- pose fundamental challenges for the pattern of leadership and management in the institutions. Given the complex context within which higher education leaders in Kenya now work and the challenges posed by these recent changes, this paper reviews what might constitute effective leadership practices within the higher education context. The paper argues that public higher education institutions in Kenya need to develop new models of leadership to make sense of the highly complex political, economic and cultural landscapes of the modern world in general and Kenyan society in particular. In addition, the paper suggests that Adair's (1973) Action Centered dimensions of leadership could be applicable and that transformational leadership with its emphasis on distributed leadership styles and collegial decision making may offer such model.

### The changing context of Higher Education system in Kenya.

The history of higher education in Kenya can be traced to the founding of the Royal Technical College in Nairobi in 1956 as a constituent college of Makerere College in Uganda. In 1961 the Royal College was elevated to university college status. As the first step towards the introduction and development of university education in Kenya, the college entered into a special arrangement with the University of London, which enabled it to prepare students for the degrees of the University of London under the establishment of the University of East Africa.

Following independence in 1963, the Royal College became the University College of Nairobi which became a constituent college of the University of East Africa. The college began with 571 enrolled students (Weidman, 1995). The University of East Africa continued operating until 1970 when the University College of Nairobi attained university status, becoming simply the University of Nairobi. In 1970 Kenyatta College was made a constituent college of the University of Nairobi; however, the University of Nairobi remained the only university in Kenya until the mid-1980s. Since then, there has been a tremendous expansion in universities. By 2010, Kenya had 7 public Universities (with several constituent colleges) and 18 private universities (Odhiambo, in press). This number has increased rapidly within the last two years. Currently, Kenya has 22 public universities (with several constituent colleges) and 26 private universities.

By 2009, the country had some 122,874 university students of which about 80% were in public universities (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Between 2005-2009, university student population increased by over 85% (Ndege, Migosi & Onsongo, 2011). This growth is reflected in Table 1.

Table 1:

*Kenyan universities student enrollment*

2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
59,200	82,100	91,500	93,200	112,200	118,300	122,800	177,500	181,500	198,300	271,143

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2009); Odhiambo (in press); Republic of Kenya (2012).

There is no other country in East Africa which has witnessed as great a surge in higher education institutions as Kenya (Munene, 2013). This rapid expansion of higher education has had a lot of implications for higher education leadership. The explosion of enrolment has put enormous pressure on public higher education systems which presently face an array of problems since the government has not matched funding with the expansion.

The debate on financing of higher education in Kenya has become very lively. On one hand, there are those who now argue that higher education brings huge individual dividends and hence should be financed privately while at the other end, there are those who consider higher education as a public good to be funded entirely by the government. Historically, when higher education in Kenya was a relatively small sector, it was free with the public covering both tuition and living expenses (Weidman, 1995) based on the country's desire to increase highly trained manpower that could replace the departing colonial administrators. In return, the graduates were bound to work in the public sector for a minimum of three years after graduation. Economic difficulties and alarming increase in population (Cutter, 2001) changed this trend and resulted in reduction of recurrent government budget allocated not only to higher education but to education in general and eventually to the introduction of user charges in higher education. By 1994, the government had decreased education budget from 37% of its total annual recurrent budget to about 30% (Kiamba, 2004). Table 2 below illustrates this continued decline in education funding.

Table 2

*Education expenditure as percentage of total public expenditure*

2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2008	2010	2011
29.6%	27.4%	26.8%	25.8%	23.7%	20.2%	17.21%	13.5%

Source: Economic Surveys, various years and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2012).

The reduction in funding has been linked to inflation, devaluation of the currency exchange rates, huge debts, economic and political turmoil and a changed fiscal climate leading to pressures from lending agencies such as World Bank and International Monetary Fund (Teffer & Altbach, 2004). Overall, government funding has been "inadequate and unreliable" (Wangenge-Ouma, 2008, p. 460) with the larger proportion catering for staff salaries and very little left for teaching/learning materials and equipment. It is therefore clear that a stronger policy is required to anticipate future efficient resource utilisation to meet the increased demand.

The public higher education institutions are now funded partly by the government and partly by the students. The students are required to pay a certain amount of fees per semester, which include tuition, registration and accommodation fees. The students also pay for their own meals and supplies and so require substantial amounts of personal funding. This cost sharing as a response to the ever declining government budget for public higher education was introduced in 1991. After the decrease, a student loan program was established to enable the needy students to access higher education institutions. However, spurred by high default rates, the scheme was reorganised resulting in the establishment of

the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) in 1995. HELB opted to use means testing to identify and target only needy students because there are inadequate funds for all students.

Recently, all public universities introduced a program called “module II” or ‘parallel degree’ for a group of students who gain entry to universities on the basis of different criteria that vary from university to university. These are programmes offered to students who have not met the prescribed cut-off points (which depend on total public university student capacity) for university admission. Students with grades as low as C+ in their Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations are now gaining admission to competitive courses like Medicine which were previously reserved for students with a grade of “A” only. This strategy was introduced mainly for the purpose of generating money. It is the strategy of admitting full fee-paying students over and above the regular students who are admitted with government subsidy (Odhiambo, in press).

Higher education in Kenya has continued to change, moving from a collection of institutions catering for selected elite to become a mass system and yet its leadership has been marked by continuity. There are many challenges that this extended role for higher education poses for leadership. The next generation of leaders will need to have the skills to deal with the expectations and paradoxes that are already apparent and may accelerate in the future.

These developments have given rise to the need for a multiplicity of new organisational structures and leadership. As Odhiambo (2011a, p.304) clearly argued:

*The environment under which universities are operating in Kenya has undergone remarkable changes during the last decade. The universities have been increasingly subjected to a variety of demographic, social, economic and technological changes, which obviously require a new direction of leadership.*

Gudo, Oanda & Olel (2011, p.113.) also argue that apart from expansion, higher education in Kenya is experiencing other changes in the form of diversification of provision, more heterogeneous student bodies, new funding arrangements, increasing focus on accountability and performance, global networking, mobility and collaboration. These changes have challenged higher education leadership with the need to revise mission statement, assess impact of new sources of funding; meet requirements for accountability and consider globalisation and the impact of international competitions.

As a result of these changes, public Higher Education institutions in Kenya are now required to start operating as private firms, becoming more commercial/profit oriented and responding to market forces. Leadership is one critical ingredient necessary to reconcile these issues. As Scott (2011, p. 229) argues; “Conventional wisdom...suggest that higher education may be experiencing a ‘deficit’ in relation to modern leadership cultures”.

## **The meaning of leadership**

Leadership researchers disagree considerably on what does and does not constitute leadership. Some have gone so far as to suggest there is no such thing as leadership: they argue that organisational successes and failures often get falsely attributed to the leader, but the situation may have a much greater impact on how the organisation functions than does any individual, including the leader (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987).

Most of these disagreements stem from the fact that leadership is a complex phenomenon involving the leader, the followers and the situation. Some leadership researchers have focused on the personality, physical traits or behaviours of the leader; others have studied the relationships between leaders and followers; still others have studied how aspects of the situation affect leaders’ actions.

Differences in definition have also been associated with different discipline perspectives of the definer (Middlehurst, 1993). A survey of the field by Hoy and Miskel (1978) led them to describe leadership as an elusive but fascinating topic of continuing interest. Bennis & Nanus (1985, p.1) remarks sums it all up:

*Leadership is a word on everyone's lips. The young attack it and the old grow wistful for it. Parents have lost it and police seek it. Experts claim it and artists spurn it, while scholars want it. Philosophers reconcile it (as authority) with liberty and theologians demonstrate its compatibility with conscience. If bureaucrats pretend they have it politicians wish they did. Everybody believes there is less of it than there used to be.*

Analysis of leadership definitions show that three particular elements commonly feature; goal setting and achievement; group activities and influence upon behavior of others (Ball, 2007). Bennett et al. (2003) argue that leadership has become important in work involving the development of policy and practice in educational settings and Ball (2007) emphasises the fact that this importance pervades educational systems and organisations and has become prominent against increasing pressures and changing environment and that higher education institutions have not been exempt from such pressures and changes. Leadership is a key issue for higher education institutions and is increasingly regarded as beneficial to improved performance across all activities including research (Ball, 2007). The increased complexity of the leadership role in the higher education environment worldwide has gained attention as a subject of study (Drew, 2010; Cohen, 2004, Knight & Trowler, 2001).

Higher education institutions have recently faced increasing complexity and change due to a range of external social, economic and political pressures (Drew et al., 2008) and Kenya is no exception. Amongst other changes, the increased demands for accountability and information technology revolution that has accelerated the growth of global society require current higher education leaders to possess a broader and more sharply set of skills than in the past. Ball (2007) looking at perceptions of academics in the UK concluded that leadership in Higher education is important and that the context of leadership is crucial.

It is obvious that the complexity and changes are making higher education leadership more problematic. In general, Drew et al. (2008, p.2) described the situation rather well:

*Part of the complexity facing universities is the dual role. On the one hand they fulfill a key role in local and global communities where they engage in knowledge creation and dissemination through teaching and research. Yet, on the other, they must operate as successful corporations able to withstand scrutiny to financial management practice, administrative reporting and relation to accreditation requirements in relevant disciplines.*

Adair's (1973) Action Centred leadership model which bridges the gap between the competing ideas of leadership as a person and leadership as an approach could help higher education institutions in an attempt to understand these complexities. It describes what leaders have to do and the actions they need to take. Although the model dates from 1973, a look at the competing issues and developments in Kenya's Higher education indicate that this model is still suitable in addressing the current situation.

## Higher education leadership in Kenya

Leadership in higher education has been the subject of intense scrutiny and observation in recent years. For many years, most universities globally have been, to a significant extent, self-organising institutions (Odhiambo 2011a). They "have sought to count rank and ritual as equal to cash reward" (Marginson & Considine, 2000, p. 1). The universities in many advanced countries are now in a process of reinvention and according to Marginson & Considine (2000) becoming more daring and more fraught and the institutional transformations more dramatic.

Two of the paths being followed by universities including those in Australia (Marginson & Considine, 2000) and Europe (Mora et al., 2010) are to increase their partnerships with business and to have strong executive control. Mora et al. (2010) recently found that European universities are becoming more active in developing relationships with business. Driving these changes is a redefined internal economy and at times by commercial and entrepreneurial spirit. These are the so-called enterprise universities or what others call “academic capitalism”, “entrepreneurial universities” or “corporate universities”. Enterprise is about advancing the institution’s prestige and competitiveness as well as about income (Odhiambo, 2011a). There has been a lot of debate regarding the merits and demerits of these changes. However, the changes have implications for higher education leadership.

In this respect, Kenyan public higher education institutions have not been left very far behind as they have undergone a major transition in the past decade and have moved from public to a greater emphasis on more private funding and have reinvented themselves as business enterprises. Financial pressures are increasingly acute, resources are constrained and student intakes have continued to increase. Accountability drives have been commonplace (Odhiambo, in press) while the quest for improved effectiveness in teaching, research and business development continues. It is therefore clear that higher education leaders in Kenya need to pick the right approach to working with individuals/people, task and group variables to achieve all these. According to Adair (1993) Action centred leadership model, leaders must direct the task, support the people and coordinate and nurture a work team as a whole.

The developments and other competing pressures are having a significant impact on the work of higher education leaders and managers. This has led to an urgent need to motivate staff, lead change and tend to managerial matters in timely and efficient way. As Middlehurst (1993) argued, at a time of change, the quality of university leadership is an issue of key importance. In general, Ball (2007, p.450) puts it rather well:

*Leadership is closely associated with change and leaders are often viewed as being necessary for responses to change in the environment and agents of change amongst colleagues or subordinates.*

In Sifuna’s (2012, p. 126) analysis of African higher education, he argued that “within the African context, changes in management [and leadership] practices have not been as profound as in more industrialized countries”, and yet “the contexts in which African higher education is operating require, in some ways, greater skill and greater commitment than those in developed countries...the challenges of rebuilding higher education in Africa region are great and it will require committed and expert leadership to achieve the necessary profound changes”. The Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) (2009) also argued that the development of leadership capacity within higher education to enable it to respond to key challenges to achieve its goals is urgent. Sifuna (2012) argues that in Kenya, this requires an environment which guarantees autonomy and academic freedom in higher education institutions.

## Leadership challenges

Organisational leadership constantly presents challenges both to the leader’s abilities and to the leader as a person as they increasingly face demanding clientele. Being a leader in itself is a challenge since most organisations place leaders in a position in which they are responsible for carrying out several parallel, quiet distinct and often superficially contradictory roles. Leaders in contemporary organisations are confronted by both external and internal challenges and expectations that make demands in their time, expertise, energies and emotional wellbeing.

Scott (2011) argues that leadership in higher education worldwide currently faces its greatest challenges but the nature or even the identity of the challenges is contested. For Kenya, it is clear that the challenges involve the changing context of higher education and include the cuts in government expenditure on higher education, the surge in higher education institutions and the government’s political interference with higher education leadership and management. With the increased student

population and the decrease in government funding, there is the challenge arising from the tension between delivering quality pedagogy and research and the necessity to create efficiencies.

As discussed earlier, it is clear that among the key challenges of higher education leadership in Kenya are the new funding requirements/arrangements (Odhiambo, 2011a; Sifuna, 2012). Student population is increasing without a commensurate increase in resourcing. Since the rapid decrease in government funding, higher education institutions have responded through the introduction of cost-sharing mechanisms which include fees, privatisation, fund raising and dual track provision. Many institutions have resorted to fee paying or parallel students taught in the evening classes or during holidays to provide them with a source of income. As Odhiambo (2011a) argue, this has had a negative impact on the quality of delivery and education in general. Many leaders are also struggling to develop the consumer-oriented mentalities and customer care systems to satisfy students especially those taking the parallel degrees who increasingly regard themselves as “paying” customers and have become more demanding.

Related to funding is the urgent challenge for higher education institutions to partner with industry and commerce and to create linkages in order to compete for industry-based funding and to undertake research and development.

These challenges dominate current debates about the future of higher education leadership and have led a number of Kenyan scholars to suggest the necessity of a new kind of leadership. Kinjanjui (2007), for example, indicated that visionary and creative leadership is necessary for transformation of higher education in Kenya and noted that restructuring of leadership, governance and management systems of each institution should be a priority. He further recommended an analysis and streamlining of the administrative and management structures to avoid waste of resources, duplication of responsibilities and overlapping mandates in the changing context of Kenyan higher education.

Higher education leaders in Kenya are vested with the largest degree of individual authority and power and with this have come the view of leadership as a person rather than an approach and the possibility of power abuse. Adair's (1973) model bridges the gap between these two competing ideas of leadership. As such, Gudo et al. (2011) have emphasised the importance of devolution of power from one person to “operational units” (Faculties, Institutes and Departments) so that the units can be strengthened to enable them to discharge their functions effectively. Sifuna (2012, p. 126) argues that in the whole, the higher education institutions tend to use “traditional management styles” and that a more “managerial model” has sprung up. Sifuna (2012) argues strongly that a more “professional management” is a necessary condition for the institutions' attempts to deal more adequately with both external and internal pressures and demands.

The other key challenge is with regard to the way in which staff and students engage with the leadership in higher education institutions. There have been many areas of university leadership which have demonstrated a continuation of autocratic leadership especially in the handling of professional and trade union disputes with staff (Sifuna, 2012) and student grievances. The management and leadership has been based on a top-down approach. Kinjanjui (2007) argued that the rules governing students' conduct and discipline are not enforced fairly and that students' disciplinary regulations need to be reviewed to include such process as appeals and aspect which have largely been ignored and which he believes have contributed to the frequent riots and closures of public higher education institutions.

The leadership responsibility to motivate staff also needs a special attention. The low level of staff participation in leadership and decision making has affected staff motivation. Gudo et al. (2011) study indicated that only about 37.7% of academics in Kenyan public universities felt motivated to effectively carry on their duties and only 40.2% felt that staff were effectively engaged in decision making. Olayo (2005) also found a low level of staff participation in decision making in Kenyan public higher education institutions and concluded that this reduced their work performance and that

the situation could be improved through the introduction of higher education leadership preparation and development programmes.

Sifuna (2012) identifies higher education autonomy and academic freedom as key challenges facing higher education leadership in Kenya and argues that although academic freedom has long been considered a necessary condition for high academic standards, it is only recently that such freedom has become a central concern of many institutions. With the increase in size, scope, importance and cost of higher education, it is not surprising that there are immense pressures from the government who fund higher education for accountability and openness. Increased external accountability has been the subject of much consternation and debate. Too much accountability can easily destroy the necessary academic ethos but as Lee (1997) observed, we should also be aware that too much autonomy might lead to higher education being unresponsive to society. All the acts of the public higher education institutions indicate that they are supposed to be autonomous of government control. However, as Sifuna (2012) argue, government involvement in the leadership of higher education in Kenya has been a common feature and “routine”.

The credibility of academic appointments and promotion processes in Kenyan higher education institutions has been a major challenge and a subject of discussion in many forums. Discussions have revolved around the political nature of many appointments, the lack of clear appointment criteria and the under-representation of women in key academic positions.

### Academic appointments and the participation of women in higher education leadership

For many years staff recruitment, deployment and promotions in Kenyan higher education has been largely influenced by party politics where the government has tended to reward academics who are considered political supporters (Gatahi et al., 2010) and these appointments have been a subject of great debate. Gudo et al. (2011) also noted this and suggested a competitive recruitment of leaders including Deans, Directors and Heads of Departments.

Since independence, the president of the country has been the Chancellor of all universities and has appointed and dismissed Vice chancellors at will who in most cases were not the best institutional leaders the universities could find but were politically loyal to the government. The powers of the president extended to the appointment of other key leaders within higher education including the Deputy Vice Chancellors and members of University Senate/ Council (Sifuna, 1998).

With the introduction of multiparty politics in Kenya in 2002, it was the hope of many that this trend was likely to change, but the only practical change which could be noted in Kibaki’s multi party government (2002-2013) was for the president to relinquish his position as the Chancellor of all public universities. Members of the university councils are still appointed by the government and the government still has a heavy hand in the appointment of Vice-chancellors (Odhiambo, 2011a). Another trend has also continued where Chancellors, Vice Chancellors and Chairs of University Councils are appointed from a community where the University is located.

As Odhiambo (2011a) argues, most decisions about public higher education development and leadership have been politicised. Mwiria et al. (2007) supported this view and observed that higher education has been the subject of much political “manipulation and intervention” and conclude that governance is probably the most important area that needs reforms in public higher education institutions. Kabaji (2010) supports this and argued that management [leadership] is one of the major challenges facing higher education institutions and noted the existence of negative ethnicity and intolerance of diverging views from leadership and the diminishing freedom of expression in higher education institutions.

The other key issue is with regard to women's participation in higher education leadership. Although gender imbalance in higher education leadership is a global issue, Odhiambo (2011b) strongly argued that the progress in Kenya has been very slow and that there is need to develop policies and strategies both at national and local levels geared towards increasing women's participation in decision making and leadership in public higher education institutions in Kenya.

Despite almost 15 years of gender activism in Kenya, the country still remains greatly challenged with regard to women's ascendancy into leadership positions. Although more women are now advancing to leadership positions in higher education, gender imbalance in higher education leadership is still a major issue because the progress towards equity has been very slow and uneven (see Table 3).

Table 3.

*Academics in top leadership positions in the public universities in Kenya*

Position	2002			2010			2013		
	Male	Female	% Female	Male	Female	% Female	Male	Female	% Female
Chancellor	6	0	0.0	7	0	0.0	10	2	16.6
Vice Chancellor	6	0	0.0	5	2	28.6	19	3	9.0
Deputy Vice Chancellors	13	2	13.0	15	4	21.1	39	6	13.3

Source: Onsongo , 2002 and 2007 ; University calendars and staff lists 2010 and 2013; Odhiambo, 2011b)

A discussion of gender and higher education leadership is important because higher education is a major site of cultural practice, identity formation and symbolic control (Odhiambo, 2011b). Academic women in Kenyan higher education as elsewhere in the world continue to experience cultural barriers to entry into leadership positions and both direct and indirect discrimination. Onsongo (2002) has noted how organisational culture, negative micro-politics and informal practices impede parity of participation in Kenya.

### Effective higher education leadership

Throughout the years, there have been many leadership style theories identified and in historical context, different forms of leadership have been effective. This has led to a lot of debate on whether effective leadership is a matter of style, inherent attributes, a specific set of behaviours or the situation at hand.

There is a sense in which a leader has traditionally been perceived as being superior, wiser, and more powerful than others. However, the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century heralded a marked shift in the analysis of what constitutes effective leadership. No longer is "heroic leadership" deemed to be the panacea that organisations seek and instead the idea of "dispersed leadership" or leadership at all levels is seen as a more appropriate means of bringing about and sustaining transformational and lasting change



(Marshall, 2007). In an increasingly polarised and complex higher education system in Kenya, higher education leaders can no longer afford to work in isolation. The art of collaborative/distributed leadership must now be considered.

The development of an evolutionary understanding of leadership in the present and future reflects the idea that leadership is based on mutual interaction rather than exercise of structural authority and influence (Odhiambo, 2007). Effective leadership clearly depends on responsive followers in a process involving collective activity. The notion of distributed leadership in higher education is the favoured strategy to achieve commitment of academic staff. Distributed leadership has been used as a synonym for “shared, collaborative, facilitative participative” (Bennett, et al., 2003, p.4) and for democratic (Woods, 2004) leadership. As Gronn (2000, p.333) argued; “distributed leadership is an idea whose time has come”.

Despite a recognised body of research from the private sector as to what makes effective leadership, higher education institutions continue to suggest that their needs are different to those of the private sector as their culture is also different (Slowey, 1995). Ramsden (1998) for example argues that leadership within the higher education is distinct from other organisational leadership because it is concerned with academic business (cited by Drew et al., 2008). However, as higher education in countries such as Kenya have begun to redefine the balance of income generated from public and private sources, it can no longer be considered in solely public sector terms nor very different from the private sector.

As in the United Kingdom, (see Scott, 2011), the leadership style that continues to prevail in Kenyan higher education can be criticised for failing to develop sufficiently robust styles of professional management and for encouraging conventional thinking and behavior which go unchallenged. Ball (2007) argues that engaging people in the research agenda and stimulating or enthusing them are key components of academic leadership and terms this (as Bass, 1985) transformational leadership. It is clear that this is the kind of leadership required in the public higher education sector. As Bass & Avolio (1994) clarify, this is when leaders:

- stimulate interest among colleagues and followers to view their work from new perspectives;
- generate awareness of the mission or vision of the team and organization;
- develop colleagues and followers to higher levels of ability and potential and motivate colleagues; and
- motivate colleagues and followers to look beyond their own interests towards those that will benefit the group.

With the current complex nature of public higher education and its leadership, it is important that Kenyan higher education leaders develop a clearer view of their role and relationship with academics. Adopting Adair’s (1973) simple model from a practical and simple angle could help in attempts to understand the overlap and mutual dependence of the work of the team, the task and the individual and in identifying the vision, purpose and future direction of higher education. Adair’s (1973) model is a useful tool for thinking about what constitutes effective leadership in relation to the job the leader is to do. The effective leader carries out the functions and exhibits the behaviours depicted by the three circles (Task, Team and Individual) (Adair, 1973).

Transformational leadership is a process in which “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation” (Burns, 1978) and such leaders seek to raise the consciousness of the followers by appealing to ideals and moral values. Such leaders are seen by Leithwood et al. (1999) to be sensitive to organisation building, developing shared vision, and to distributing

leadership. It is therefore clear that future higher education leaders in Kenya will have to be transformational to address the many problems the sector is currently facing.

## Conclusion

This paper indicates that the most difficult challenges facing higher education leadership in Kenya present themselves as dilemmas, paradoxes and tensions. Sifuna (2012, p.123) argues that higher education leaders in Kenya “are not recruited for their leadership potentials but rather are selected and rewarded for research and course development” and at times recruitment is based on party politics. The need for leadership preparation and development is therefore clear. A more complex socio-cultural milieu in which Kenyan higher education leaders now work point to a need for effective leadership preparation and development programmes to support them in their daily work. As Drew et al. (2008) argued, leadership preparation and development programs have been utilised to develop the capacities required of leaders in a changing landscape.

Although it is unlikely that any one model can address all the challenges identified, Adair’s (1973) Action-centered leadership model linking the achievement of the task, building and maintaining the team and developing the individual as suggested by Drew (2010) are key dimensions of leadership which could be applicable to leadership in Kenyan higher education institutions. The model’s emphasis on the personal, human dimension in each of the three foci is of particular importance in the development of future leadership in higher education institutions in Kenya. Middlehurst (2007), for example, argues that it is important to take account of this dimension in exploring all the challenges of practices and development in higher education leadership setting.

It is also suggested that improving women's participation in leadership roles is an important part of the struggle to improve the freedom, rights and opportunities of all women worldwide (Odhiambo, 2011b). Therefore, there is need to develop policies and strategies both at national and local levels geared towards increasing women's participation in decision making and leadership if Kenyan higher education institutions are to succeed in enhancing gender equity in academic leadership.

Finally, as discussed in this paper, higher education institutions in Kenya need to develop new models of leadership to make sense of the highly complex political, economic and cultural landscapes of the modern world. It is critical that future higher education leaders be comprised of independent, critical thinkers who have creative, innovative ideas, nonpolitical and can provide clear vision to create coalitions, partnerships and collaborations and attract human and fiscal capital. The focus on leadership exemplified in the roles of higher education leaders, the creation of an appropriate vision for the institutions and the importance for strategic focus in arriving at a clear sense of mission is what will move the institutions forward.

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