

University Leadership During Times of Significant Transformation: A Case of Kyambogo University in Uganda

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Abstract

This study investigated how leadership was exercised at Kyambogo University [KyU] (in Uganda) during its formation that involved the merger of three tertiary institutions and the period immediately thereafter. This was regarded as a period of significant transformation at the institution. The study was prompted by the rampant strikes and protests that the students and staff staged against the University's leaders during that time. The researchers used the descriptive cross-sectional sample survey design to collect both qualitative and quantitative data through the use of surveys and interview methods from 44 administrators, 201 academic staff, 345 students, and 230 support staff. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis techniques. The study findings indicated that, at that time, KyU leadership lacked a shared vision and common strategies for managing transformation besides being non-collegial and heavily bureaucratic in nature. Secondly, the University was bedeviled with a myriad of leadership challenges related to, amongst others, personality clashes amongst leaders; the problem of red-tape in decision making; the shortage of funds and other resources; and the interference by external agents in the affairs of the University. However, several efforts were also made to avert the crises that the institution experienced at that time. It was thus concluded that the kind of leadership exercised during that time of transformation was partly responsible for the challenges experienced then and probably today. The researchers therefore recommended that the University managers should often develop a shared vision, employ a collegial kind of leadership, and be supportive to different units as well as individuals in the institution.

Keywords: leadership, management, transformation, challenges, university

1. Introduction

The importance of leadership in ensuring success in any human endeavor is not debatable. Effective leaders challenge, motivate, and empower, in diverse ways, their teams to lead to organizational success (O'Toole, Galbraith, & Lawler, 2002). Such kind of leadership is required at all times in work organizations; but most importantly, when significant transformation is taking place. However, exercising leadership at such times can be challenging and a daunting task - even to the most accomplished leaders. The situation during the formation of Kyambogo University (KyU) in Uganda and the period immediately thereafter that involved the merger of three tertiary institutions seemed to have faced enormous leadership challenges. This study was aimed at investigating how leadership was exercised during that time when significant transformation was taking place at the institution. In this section, the authors present the background to the study, the study objectives and research questions.

Historically, managing mergers of any kind has never been an easy feat. According to Mildred (2002) (as quoted by Cecil, Regina & Riyaadh, 2013), in 1983, when South Australia merged 10 existing higher education institutions into only three, a number of challenges were faced in managing the new institutions. Similar challenges were also reported by Cecil et al. (2013) when South Africa also restructured many of its universities and colleges between 2001 and 2007 - implying that offering leadership to higher education institutions during times of significant transformation is overwhelming - including for experienced leaders. The case of KyU was equally not an exception. This was what prompted the researchers to investigate how the leadership of KyU was exercised especially during that time when the University had just been set up and the period immediately thereafter; thus, the genesis of this study.

Theoretically, this study was modelled on the contingency theory of leadership. The theory was postulated in 1964 by the Austrian psychologist, Fred Edward Fiedler. The theory states that "the effectiveness of leadership depends upon the situation, and there are numerous factors, such as the nature of the task, leader's personality, and make-up of the group being led" (Leadership-central.com, 2017, para 4). According to the theory, effective leadership requires the leader to match his/her leader behavior to the situation, task at hand, and to the kind of subordinates the leader is working with. In that regard, when a leader fails to align his/her leadership behavior to the task, the situation and subordinates, the theory points out that the incongruence will result into leadership ineffectiveness. In this study, the theory was opted for because the investigation focused on examining the kind of leadership that was exercised at KyU immediately the institution was set up as a result of the merger between three different tertiary institutions. This period was characterized by significant

transformation in the way the three merged institutions and the new University operated. The University also experienced numerous student and staff unrests during that time. The researchers hypothesized that the inability of the university managers at the time to behave in tandem with the prevailing situation, task and subordinates could have accounted for the tension that the institution experienced.

The study focused majorly on the concept of leadership. According to Mullins (2002), the concept of leadership has generally no universally agreed upon meaning. Mullins contends that leadership generally focuses on the attributes of an individual and the process through which the individual influences decisions and guides people working in an organization. Kavanagh (2006) agrees with this view about leadership but reiterates that leadership is essentially a process of social influence in which individuals want to feel included, supported and reinforced, especially during times of change. In this study, leadership was looked at in terms of the process by which university managers influence others to accomplish objectives and directs the University, in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. Leadership was thus characterized by whether the university leaders were rated to have shared institutional vision and strategies, communicate effectively with subordinates, and also motivate staff in their work.

Contextually, the study focused on the issue of leadership at KyU. According to the Uganda's Inspectorate of Government (2015, p. iv), "Kyambogo University (KyU) was established by the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (2003) by merging three institutions: Uganda Polytechnic Kyambogo (UPK), Uganda National Institute of Special Education (UNISE) and Institute of Teacher Education Kyambogo (ITEK)". However, the Inspectorate of Government (2015, p. iv) reveals that "Since its inception, it has experienced turbulence due to strikes by students, faculty and other members of staff. Between 2006 and 2013, 12 strikes were recorded as having taken place at KyU". The majority of these strikes were attributed to the massive corruption, nepotism, irregular admissions and awarding of marks as well as financial mismanagement by the managers of the University (Parliament of Uganda, 2007). In fact, the leadership of the University was also blamed for its failure to unite the members of the institutions that were merged to form KyU. Some stakeholders claimed that the University lacked a shared vision and the leadership was not inclusive, collegial, and coherent in nature. These caused the researchers to hypothesize that the way leadership was exercised at KyU when it was formed and the period immediately thereafter was responsible for the turbulence that the institution experienced at that time, other factors notwithstanding.

1.1 Study Objectives

This study was designed to investigate how leadership was exercised at KyU. Specifically, however, the study was intended to: (i) establish how the leadership in KyU was exercised; (ii) identify leadership challenges that were faced; and (iii) establish how the leadership challenges faced during the time of its formation and the period immediately thereafter were addressed.

1.2 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions: (i) how was leadership exercised at KyU during the time of its formation and the period immediately thereafter? (ii) What leadership challenges were faced at the University during that time? And (iii) how were the leadership challenges, at that time, addressed?

2. Literature Review

Some earlier scholars have already looked at the nature of leadership offered in higher education institutions especially during periods of significant transformation. The majority of the earlier scholars emphasized the need for teamwork and effective communication if successful leadership is to be attained. According to Walker, Smither and Waldman (2008), successful leadership requires the promotion of teamwork. However, they stress that teamwork needs to be promoted by the team itself as they work together to identify opportunities for improving productivity and efficiency at work. Nevertheless, team working is affected especially in a work environment that is becoming increasingly complex and dynamic. The case of KyU at the time of its formation and the period immediately thereafter was not an exception.

Tupper (2006), and Piker and Lesser (1995) advocated for structural adjustment and sharing of ideas if university leaders are to successfully manage periods of transformation. These, the scholars observed, require effective communication and the provision of knowledge to every staff if resistance to new ideas is to be minimized. In fact, Nicholson (2015) says that with great change, often comes great resistance. To overcome resistance in work situation, leaders need to handle the subordinates patiently with conversations and feedback. This, according to Nicholson, should involve and encourage vigorous dialogue on whatever issue the group is most concerned with while providing reluctant members of the team with certainty. Kavanagh (2006) agrees with that view; but reiterates that communication and transparency on the part of the leaders are quite essential if successful leadership is to take place. She says that effective communication will not only determine how a leader will be regarded, but also who will be regarded as a leader. In fact, Evans (1994) says that leadership -

especially during times of transformation, requires the participation of people who must first change themselves if organizational change in to be successful. Leaders in the case of KyU, may not have changed because the University faced several challenges during that time of significant transformation.

According to Bertrand (2002), many leaders make mistakes especially when managing change in work organizations. One of the commonest mistakes leaders often make is to try to forcefully change the mindsets of those who work in the organization, and how they do things. Kavanagh (2006) recommends that at such times, leaders should try to create an atmosphere of psychological safety for all the individuals to engage in the new behaviors required of them. In this way, the individuals will first ‘test the waters’ of the new culture they are required to adopt by verifying for themselves the validity of the new beliefs and values. In the case of KyU where three tertiary institutions were merged into a single institution, there was a need for leaders to be cautious about the ‘death’ of the old institutional cultures, and the emergence of the new university culture. This could have resulted into a cultural cringe where the cultures of the different merged institutions were clashing. This could have also partly caused the leadership challenges that the University experienced during its formation and in the period immediately thereafter.

3. Methodology

This was a mixed methods study where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Specifically, the study employed the descriptive cross-sectional sample survey design where data were collected from a sample of the target population with the intention of generalizing the findings on the overall study population. The study sample was comprised of 345 students, 44 administrators, 201 academic staff, and 230 support staff who were chosen through purposive and convenience sampling techniques. The data were collected with the use of survey and interview methods while appropriate self-administered questionnaires and interview guide that were prior tested for validity and reliability were used as tools of data collection. Finally, the researchers analyzed the data with the use of descriptive statistics and content analysis technique. In the next section, the results of the study are presented.

4. Results

The results of this study have been presented in two parts. The first part is centered on the background information on respondents. Meanwhile, the second part provides answers to the three research questions.

4.1 Background Information on Respondents

Data on the background of respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by their Background Characteristics

Questionnaire	Attributes	Students	Academic Staff	Support Staff
Sex of Respondents	Females	137 (39.7%)	99 (49.3%)	152 (66.1%)
	Males	208 (60.3%)	102 (50.7%)	78 (33.9%)
Position of Responsibility (Students & Non-academic staff) or Ranks (Academic Staff)	Coordinators	60 (17.4%)	N/A	N/A
	Guild Representatives	18 (5.2%)	N/A	N/A
	Sports Representatives	7 (2.0%)	N/A	N/A
	Holding no position	260 (75.4%)	N/A	N/A
	Senior Lecturers	N/A	16 (7.9%)	N/A
	Lecturers	N/A	80 (39.8%)	N/A
	Assistant Lecturers	N/A	37 (18.4%)	N/A
	Teaching Assistants	N/A	68 (33.8%)	N/A
	Secretaries	N/A	N/A	87 (37.8%)
	Security Guards	N/A	N/A	50 (21.7%)
	Office Attendants	N/A	N/A	83 (36.1%)
	Cooks	N/A	N/A	10 (4.4%)
Year of Service (for Staff) Or Year of Study (for Students)	1 st & 2 nd	300 (86.8%)	N/A	N/A
	3 rd & 4 th	45 (13.2%)	N/A	N/A
	< 2 years	N/A	87 (43.3%)	96 (41.7%)
	2 – 5 years	N/A	74 (36.8%)	55 (23.9%)
	Above 5 years	N/A	40 (19.9%)	79 (34.4%)

Note: N/A = Not applicable to the particular group of respondents

The results in Table 1 show the distribution of study respondents by sex, position of responsibility or rank, and year of service or study. The results indicate that more male students (60.3%) participated in the study than their female counterparts (39.7%). This suggests that the male students were more available for the study. Similarly, the results in Table 1 also indicate that slightly more male academic staff (50.7%) participated in the study than their female counterparts (49.3%). However, the difference in their numbers was not significant. This happened because the researchers intended to avoid gender bias. Besides, the results in the same table indicate

that more female support staff (66.1%) participated in the study than their male counterparts (33.9%). This suggested that there were more female support staff in the University than their male counterparts.

The results in Table 1 also show that 17.4% of the students who participated in the study were coordinators, while 5.2% sit on the Guild Council, 2.0% were sports representatives and the majority (75.4%) had no position of responsibility in the University. This rate of participation was in proportion to the number of subjects that constitute the different groups. On the side of the academic staff, 7.9% of them were senior lecturers, 39.8% were lecturers, and 18.4% were assistant lecturers. The remainder were teaching assistants. This rate of participation was also in proportion to the number of subjects that constitute the different groups of the study population. Meanwhile, 37.8% of the support staff who participated in the study were secretaries, 21.7% were security guards, and 36.1% were office attendants. Cooks constituted the least percentage (4.4%). These suggest that the secretaries and office attendants were more available and willing to participate in the study.

The results in Table 1 also indicate that 86.8% of the students were first and second years and the remainders were third and fourth years. This occurred because the third and fourth year students had little time to spare for the study. On the other hand, 43.3% of the academic staff had worked in the University for less than two years, while 36.8% had worked for a period of between two to five years; and only 19.9% of the staff had worked for over a period of five years. Nevertheless, the cumulative percentage of those who had worked for more than two years was significant - thereby enabling the researchers to gain a valid understanding of the issues that were investigated. On the side of the support staff, 41.7% of them had served the University for less than two years, 23.9% had served for a period of between two to five years, while 34.4% had served for a period of over five years. The researchers considered the proportion of participants who had worked in the University for over two years to be reasonable; therefore, enabling them to get valid and reliable findings.

4.2 Research Question One: How was leadership exercised at KyU during the time of its formation and the period immediately thereafter?

The researchers sought for answers from respondents regarding the way in which leadership was exercised in KyU during the time of its formation and the period immediately thereafter. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with statements that were provided in the questionnaire to highlight the nature of leadership at the University then. The results indicating respondents' views on the nature of leadership are hereby presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Percentage of respondents who agreed with items on nature of leadership

Questionnaire Items	Category of Respondents			
	Students (F& %)	Support staff (F& %)	Academic staff (F& %)	Administrators (F& %)
Our University Leaders....				
Have a clear vision	81 (21.9%)	78 (33.3%)	56 (27.9%)	22 (50.0%)
Have clear strategies	69 (20.0%)	82 (35.6%)	60 (29.8%)	20 (45.4%)
Consult stakeholders	130 (35.0%)	98 (42.0%)	66 (32.8%)	28 (63.6%)
Provide feedback to stakeholders	135 (39.1%)	96 (41.7%)	67 (33.3%)	29 (65.9%)
Inspire others	99 (28.6%)	147 (64.0%)	45 (22.4%)	30 (68.2%)
Frequently communicate with stakeholders	96 (27.8%)	97 (42.1%)	62 (30.8%)	24 (54.5%)
Encourage teamwork	98 (28.4%)	86 (37.3%)	67 (33.3%)	25 (56.8%)

The results in Table 2 indicate that only 21.9% of the students who participated in the study agreed that leaders had a clear vision for the University, while majority (78.1%) of the students disagreed. On the other hand, 33.3% of the support staff who participated in the study agreed that leaders had a clear vision for the University, while the majority (66.7%) also disagreed. Meanwhile, 27.9% and 50.0% of the academic staff and administrators respectively agreed that leaders had a clear vision for the University. These results implied that the leaders of the University did not develop a shared vision of the institution with key internal stakeholders.

On whether leaders have clear strategies for University operations, only 20.0% of the students who participated in the study agreed, while 35.6% of the support staff, and 29.8% of the academic staff agreed. However, a whole 45.5% of the administrators who participated in the study agreed that they had clear strategies for the University during the time of transformation. This implies that while a larger number of the administrators believed that there were appropriate strategies for achieving university goals, the other internal stakeholders did not share their views – implying that they were uninformed about university goals and strategies.

The results in Table 2 also indicate that 35.0% of the students who participated in the study agreed that leaders regularly consulted stakeholders. Meanwhile, 42.0% of the support staff, 32.8% of the academic staff, and 63.6% of the administrators who participated in the study agreed that university leaders consulted stakeholders regularly. This implies that majority of the internal stakeholders were not consulted by leaders; therefore, they felt left out in the leadership of the institution.

Still, the results in the same table indicate that 39.1% of the students who participated in the study

agreed that university leaders provided feedback to stakeholders. Meanwhile, 41.7 % of the support staff, 33.3% of the academic staff, and 65.9% of the administrators who participated in the study agreed that KyU leaders provide regular feedback to the stakeholders. This implies that while the majority of the internal stakeholders disagreed that they were provided feedback by the university leaders, majority of the administrators on the other hand agreed that feedback was regularly provided to stakeholders.

On whether KyU leaders inspired others, 28.6% of the students, 64.0% of the support staff, 22.4% of academic staff, and 30.0% of the administrators all agreed that they were inspired by the university leaders. These results showed that the majority of only the support staff felt inspired by the university leaders probably because of their relatively low levels of education.

On whether KyU leaders frequently communicated with stakeholders during the period investigated, 27.8% of the students, 42.1% of the support staff, 30.8% of the academic staff, and 54.8% of the administrators who participated in the study agreed that the leaders made regular communication with stakeholders. Meanwhile, on teamwork, the results in the table indicate that 28.4% of the students, 37.3% of the support staff, 33.3% of the academic staff, and 56.8 % of administrators who participated in the study agreed that the university leaders encouraged teamwork during the period studied. These results imply that, to some extent, leaders were communicating with stakeholders and encouraging teamwork though not satisfactorily since the majority of the stakeholders did not agree. This also meant that the university leaders did not fully embrace collegiality as a style of leadership at the institution.

During interviews, different respondents expressed different views about the kind of leadership that was exercised by leaders during and immediately after KyU was established. For instance, when they were asked to express their views on how power was shared among university leaders, one of the academic staff observed:

The University as a unique organization should always share power amongst its key stakeholders especially the academic staff, faculty leaders, and administrators. Unfortunately, power sharing at KyU has remained a challenge since the institution was formed. In practice, power is wielded by those who hold higher leadership positions at the expense of the majority who also have a stake in the institution. Such an anomaly must stop if the institution is to operate peacefully.

Another respondent meanwhile observed that “reorganization within the university administration and the management structure affected the power sharing and the way departments work with students and with each other. It looks like the leaders have forgotten that the University is a mere merger of three different tertiary institutions”. In addition, another interviewee noted that

There is a wide distance between senior administration and the professionals at the operational level who directly serve the students on a daily basis. This is what is causing tension between top administrators and the staff. Unless, this distance is reduce, chaos is bound to continue at the institution.

All in all, the different interviewees seemed to concur with the fact that the leadership exercised at KyU from the time it was formed was never all-inclusive. Some members of the University staff actually felt sidelined in the leadership of the institution given that they were drawn from three different institutions in order to create the University.

4.3 Research Question Two - What leadership challenges were faced at the University during that time?

The researchers sought for answers from different respondents regarding the leadership challenges that were faced at KyU during that time of its formation and the period immediately thereafter. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with statements that were provided in the questionnaire to highlight the leadership challenges faced at the University then. The results indicating respondents’ views on the leadership challenges faced at the Institution are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Percentage of Respondents who agreed with items on Leadership Challenges

Questionnaire Items	Category of Respondents			
	Students F (%)	Support staff F (%)	Academic staff F (%)	Administrators F (%)
Insufficient funding	220 (63.8%)	150 (65.2%)	200 (99.5%)	42 (95.0%)
External interference	111 (32.1%)	108 (46.9%)	122 (60.6%)	40 (90.9 %)
Limited facilities	256 (74.2%)	126 (54.8 %)	152 (75.6%)	42 (95.5%)
Leadership wrangles	260 (75.4%)	196 (85.2%)	167 (83 %)	15 (34.0%)
Rapid growth in student numbers	96 (28.2%)	200 (87.0%)	188 (93.5%)	16 (35.0%)
Rapid growth in staff numbers	37 (10.7%)	62 (26.9%)	102 (50.7%)	38 (86.3%)
Ineffective communication	250 (72.5%)	211 (91.7%)	196 (97.5%)	7 (15.0%)
Difficult in managing change	198 (57.3%)	108 46.9%)	197 (98.0%)	12 (27.2%)

Results in Table 3 indicate that 63.8% of students, 65.2% of the support staff, and 99.5% of the academic staff who participated in the study agreed that inadequate funding caused leadership challenges; meanwhile, 95.0% of the administrators agreed to the same. These findings implied that there was a mismatch

between the funding of KyU and the demands of the institution - thus causing discomfort among the stakeholders. In the same table, the results indicate that 32.1% of the students, 46.9% of the support staff, 60.6% of the academic staff, and 90.9% of the administrators agreed that external interference played a big role in destabilizing the leadership of KyU. This implies that the leadership challenges faced by the University were not only internally generated, but were also externally influenced.

The results in Table 3 indicate that 74.2% of the students, 54.8% of the support staff, 75.6% of the academic staff, and 95.5% of the administrators who participated in the study agreed that limited facilities in KyU was a challenge experienced during its formation and the period immediately thereafter. These results implied that inadequate facilities at the University were partly responsible for the difficulties that were faced in managing the transformation process. Besides, 75.4% of the students, 85.2% of the support staff, 83.0% of the academic staff, and 34.0% of the administrators who participated in the study agreed that there were a lot of leadership wrangles among top university administrators during the formation of KyU. This eventually turned into perpetual power struggles among the leaders - thereby resulting into the social unrests that the University experienced at that time.

On the other hand, 28.2% of the students, 87% of the support staff, 93.5% of the academic, and 35% of the administrators agreed that the increased number of students caused leadership challenges at the University. This could suggest that the student enrolment at that time far exceeded the number of academic staff that impeded the concentration of the leaders in managing the transformation process at the institution.

The results in Table 3 also reveal that 72.5 % of the students, 91.7% of the support staff, 97.5% of the academic staff, and 15% of the administrators who participated in the study agreed that ineffective communication was one of the challenges that KyU experienced immediately the institution was established. This suggests that the communication channels that were used at the time could have been ineffective in ensuring that every stakeholder knows what was taking place at the University. The researchers believe that the use of ineffective communication methods could have led to the leadership crisis that the institution faced, then.

In the same table, the results also indicate that 57.3% of the students, 46.9% of the support staff, 98% of the academic staff, and 27.2% of the administrators who participated in the study agreed that it was difficult to manage change. This implies that students, support and academic staff appreciated the difficulties that the leadership of the institution experienced during that time. They stated that the managers of the institution faced challenges in managing change; thus, leading to the turbulence that the institution experienced immediately after it was formed.

During interviews, one of the academic staff revealed that “the crisis in the University is based on the current old-fashioned leadership which is top-down and bureaucratic in style”. Another administrator meanwhile observed that “the reorganization within the university administration and the management structure that arose as a result of merging the three tertiary institutions; that is, ITEK, UPK and UNISE negatively affected the way departments worked with students, and with each other”. This, according to the same interviewee, “caused tension between departments and individuals in leadership positions - thereby resulting into the turbulence that the institution is undergoing”. However, an academic staff who was interviewed lamented that,

Lack of top leadership support; lack of teamwork, and shared purpose; lack of trust in others by leaders; misuse of power, lack of meaningful participation and proper use of communication channels were all responsible for the failure to effectively manage the transformation process at the University.

On the other hand, one support staff said that “the biggest challenge is that people from different institutions that were merged failed to accept that things have changed - so they failed to change their mindset”. Meanwhile, a student who was also interviewed remarked that; “the bureaucratic tendencies practiced at the University by top administrators were responsible for the turbulence that the institution is experiencing because it has slowed down the process of decision-making”. According to him, “a lot of time was lost in trying to solve the problems of individuals in the institution”. Another interviewee meanwhile observed that “even students have good ideas; but they cannot approach the leadership and I do not know whether the Guild Council represents us well” (Sic). All these observations implied that the stakeholders were then uncomfortable with the manner in which the leadership of KyU was exercised especially during that time of transition.

4.4 Research Question Three - How were the leadership challenges, at that time, addressed?

During interviews, different respondents gave diverse responses about how the leadership challenges that were faced at the time were addressed. The researchers opted to seek answers to this question purely by using the interview method. In attempting to answer the above question, one support staff observed that:

The University has been having problem in putting everyone in the know of what is taking place in the institution. This must be reversed because if stakeholders are not fully informed of whatever is taking place at their institution, then there is bound to be some kind of anxiety amongst them. This would partly cause the kind of turbulence that Kyambogo University has been undergoing. However, the managers have recently tried to improve on the flow of communication; and this is trying to ease

tension amongst the stakeholders.

A student respondent who was interviewed meanwhile had a different opinion about how the leadership challenges have been addressed. He argued that “bridging the distance between the leaders and the University’s academic and support staff have been the best way of lessening tension and improving service delivery at the institution.” Some other administrators shared this same opinion.

On the complaint about the kind of leadership styles that the leaders have been exhibiting, one respondents observed that “some of the university leaders are arrogant, aloof, and difficult to work with”. In fact, another interviewee lamented that “it is the unfriendly behavior of some of the leaders that often attract the rough reactions from the staff and students. However, this was being addressed through training of the staff - especially during staff retreats”. Indeed, one administrator observed that the University’s leaders “were now set to adapt a collegial kind of leadership and to build trust among all internal stakeholders. I believe this will help to improve the work climate at the institution”. All in all, while the institution faced several challenges after its formation and the period immediately thereafter, efforts have equally been made to counter these challenges.

5. Discussion

This study set out to establish how leadership was exercised at KyU during its formation and the period immediately thereafter. The findings revealed that, at that time, KyU leadership lacked a shared vision and common strategies for managing transformation besides being non-collegial and heavily bureaucratic in nature. Second, the University was bedeviled with a myriad of leadership challenges - even though there were efforts put in place to avert the challenges that the institution experienced at that time. The finding that KyU leadership lacked a shared vision and common strategies for managing transformation besides being non-collegial and heavily bureaucratic in nature was in agreement with the work of other scholars who have ever investigated the management of institutions that were formed as a result of merging of two or more other institutions. According to Mildred (2002) (as cited by Cecil et al., 2013), when South Australia merged 10 existing higher education institutions into only three in 1983, the leaders of the institution also faced several challenges. First, workers drawn from the different institutions found it difficult to integrate and work as a single unit. Moreover, Mildred lament that every staff from the different institutions that were merged wanted their way of life (or institutional culture) to dominate in the new institution that was created. This, Mildred reiterates, brought in a lot of tension among the leaders. This scenario does not seem to have been very different with what transpired at KyU because the University was created as a result of merging three tertiary institutions, namely: UPK, ITEK and UNISE. The results also show that staff from the three different institutions also wanted their institutional cultures to override one another - thereby resulting into leadership difficulties. A similar situation was also experienced in South Africa. According to Cecil et al. (2013), when South Africa restructured many of its universities and colleges between 2001 and 2007, the new institutions also faced several leadership challenges. In fact, Cecil and others argue that the staff from the different institutions wanted to play more significant roles than the others - thereby resulting into conflicts among the participating institutions. However, according to Bain (as cited by Manfred, 2008), it would be possible to satisfactorily manage and lead merged institution if the leaders can develop appropriate visions and strategies for achieving institutional goals. Besides, leaders should make the participation in the affairs of the institutions all-inclusive. This would reduce the tendencies for individuals drawn from different institutions to squabble over resources and positions – thereby reducing the leadership challenges that such merged institutions undergo during that period of significant transformation.

The finding that several leadership challenges were faced at KyU was also in congruence with that of other scholars who pointed out that managing institutions during period of transformation is not an easy feat. Odoakley (2007) for instance argued that to successfully manage the transformation process in any organization, the leaders must possess the ability to do so. Odoakley reiterates that the success in managing the transformation process depends upon the leaders’ ability to consult the right people and make them part of the transformation agenda. However, it appears like the leaders of KyU were not consultative enough – something that eventually created leadership challenges.

The study also established that a number of measures were adopted to overcome the challenges that were faced at KyU. This finding was also in tandem with that of other scholars. For instance, in the study, it was discovered that improvement in communication system was one way of addressing the leadership challenges that were faced at KyU. This finding was in line with the advice of Goodfellow who in 1985 counseled that strategic leaders must often develop sensing networks, expand the target audience, gather and broaden the power base, alert the organization that change is coming in order to prepare the members of the organization to work together towards a common goal. This view was also in consonant with that of Spiker and Lesser (1995) who argued that leading an organization through change involves sharing ideas and constructively balancing human needs with those of the organization. All these scholars put emphasis on the role of effective communication in managing change. However, Fishman and Kavanagh (1989) suggested that the behaviors of the leader, such as listening fully and giving recognition or otherwise being positive about employees' attempts at contribution during the

change process, to a large extent, determine how individuals respond to the overall process of transformation within an organization. The leaders of KyU probably needed to have listened more to their subordinates and also recognized their contributions to the wellbeing of the new institution.

6. Conclusion

Basing on the findings and the discussion that ensued, it was concluded that the kind of leadership that was exercised at KyU during that time of significant transformation was, to a large extent, responsible for the challenges that the institution experienced then and probably today. Besides, much of the challenges the University faced at that time of significant transformation arose as a result of the difficulties the leaders encountered in managing change in work organizations. Following the above conclusion, the researchers recommended that the university leaders should often develop a shared vision, employ a collegial kind of leadership, and be supportive to different units as well as individuals in the institution. Besides, many university managers need to undergo training in managing change before significant transformation such as the merging of institutions are to be undertaken in higher education, anywhere.

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