



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**REMARKS MADE BY PROF. PETER M. F. MBITHI, DEPUTY
VICE-CHANCELLOR (A&F) DURING THE STUDENT
LEADERS' TRAINING AT THE KCB LEADERSHIP CENTRE
ON 17TH JUNE 2009**

TOPIC: "STEWARDSHIP AND RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE"

Who is a Steward?

A steward may be defined as one who is called upon to exercise responsible care over possessions entrusted to him or her. It also refers to a person appointed to supervise or assist in the supervision of the arrangements of a large gathering of people, essentially a manager, whose main hallmark is careful, frugal and prudent management.

The moment the students elected the whole lot of you to various leadership positions, they did thrust in you the duty to act as their stewards, and like a steward of a ship, you are supposed to navigate the students' union and members through both calm and turbulent waters.

In the last couple of years, the University has engaged the student leadership in a series of sessions where matters of proper leadership, guidance and management have been discussed. It is our belief that we all have a duty not only

to manage our resources prudently, but also to show by example what proper management entails. This has also meant doing an overhaul of the existing administrative structures in the University.

The University has previously operated in an environment with strict controls where processes were slow and fairly bureaucratic and which could not effectively serve the challenges of a dynamic and competitive environment in which the University currently operates. There was also a notable communication disconnect not only between the higher echelons and the lower end of the structure, but also between management and the student body. This led to non-strategic development of the University, with attendant problems of service delivery.

In the revised University of Nairobi 2008-2013 Strategic Plan, the University undertook to develop a governance system that effectively serves the University, driven by the following set of strategies and actions:

- **Lobby for a more enabling legislative and regulatory framework.**
- **Develop and operationalize enabling regulations.**
- **Implement a devolved and effective management structure.**
- **Review and implement the structure and staffing norms of staff in administrative units.**

In order to realize a visionary, innovative leadership and management that is visible, open and transparent, the University has undertaken to:

- **Provide continuous leadership development.**
- **Develop and implement an ethical, effective, efficient, equitable, transparent and objective management systems and processes.**
- **Implement a change management strategy.**
- **Ensure all staff and students embrace the Vision, Mission and Core Values of the University.**

Most of what is stated above has been implemented or is in the process (Strategic Plan runs up to 2013) and I believe all of you have seen the Vision, Mission and Core Values of the University in various posters, brochures, our Service Charter and in our Website.

ISO CERTIFICATION

As you are all aware, the University obtained its ISO 9001:2008 certification last year, 2008. The major task here is that of preparing and implementing an ISO Quality Management System (QMS), which is the one that is tested in terms of workability, effectiveness and capacity to deliver up to quality standards. When the QMS meets these standards, it is certified and given a specified duration of viability e.g. the University of Nairobi Quality Management System is valid up to 2011, when it will need to be re-tested, updated as necessary and certified afresh. But what is the essence of QMS?

This is where an organization:-

- i. Needs to demonstrate its ability to consistently provide a product that meets customer and applicable regulatory requirements, and;**
- ii. Aims to enhance customer satisfaction through its effective application of the system, including processes for continual improvement of the system and the assurance of conformity to customers and applicable regulatory requirements.**

Ultimately, the key words in ISO certification are “Quality” and “Customer satisfaction”. We believe the University has done a lot in enhancing these, and, on its own, the QMS has systems and checks, including regular audits, to ensure conformity.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

When you join student leadership, some of you would want to see it in terms of power, which leans towards politics. Whereas this is partly correct, Management would like to see you first as leaders.

You may have heard that leaders are made, not born. A person becomes a leader when a leader is needed and the individual rises to the occasion. Many individuals have lived average lives until a situation arises which requires that he/she steps forward and accept the mantle of leadership, with all that it entails. You then polish up your leadership by practicing the qualities of and behavior of leaders who have gone before you. Leadership is therefore developed by practice and repetition.

The more you behave like a leader, the more positive you feel about yourself. You enjoy higher levels of self esteem, self respect and personal pride. You become more effective in bringing about positive changes in your work and personal life.

It is this kind of leadership within the student union and associations that we want to nurture and encourage. Remember, the more you exercise the qualities of leadership in small matters, the more you will be given an opportunity to be a leader in larger matters. The better you fulfill your responsibilities today, the greater the responsibilities that will be entrusted to you in the future.

In the environment we operate in, emotional maturity is one of the most important and respected qualities of leadership. It requires that you are at peace with yourself, and that you remain calm in the face of adversity and

difficulties. Emotional maturity enables you to live with uncertainty and ambiguity without becoming nervous or angry. Rather than fearing conflict or avoiding change, you accept them as essential and unavoidable parts of the leadership role. You embrace change and look for the opportunities that are contained in every change.

That is my challenge to you: That in your new capacity as SONU leaders, you should always exhibit emotional maturity. It will assist all of us in the stewardship of this great institution, so that we all share the fruits of responsible management.

Thank you all and I wish you all the best, both in your capacity as SONU leaders, and as students of University of Nairobi.