

2.3 Other Developments, 1947-1962

A number of developments took place between 1947 and 1962 that accelerated the process of establishing the University of East Africa.

2.3.1 The Royal Technical College

One of the major developments that took place between the late 1940s and the mid-1950s was the establishment of the Royal Technical College [R. T. C.] in Kenya. The history of this College goes back to 1947 when the idea of establishing an institution for Higher Learning was conceived by the colonial government in Kenya. During this year, the Kenya Government drew up a plan for the establishment of a Technical and Commercial Institute. By 1949 this plan had become an East African concept aimed at providing higher technical education for all the territories of East Africa.⁵⁷ In 1949 a Commission under G. P. Willoughby (the Willoughby Commission) recommended that the Kenya Government should be urged to establish such an institution. Initially the proposed college was meant mainly for the benefit of European and Asian students.⁵⁸ That the College should be inclusive and inter-territorial was an after-thought.

Another sense in which the proposal was initially exclusive was with regard to its territorial particularism. The envisaged College was meant for Kenyans only. However, as plans got underway for the College's construction, Dr. F. J. Harlow, then Secretary of States' Assistant Educational Advisor for Technical Education, was tasked to advise on the general proposals, and particularly on the possibility of this envisaged institution being made available to students from the entire East African region. It was after this

⁵⁷ University of East Africa: University College, Nairobi, Calendar for 1967-68, 45.

development that the proposal was modified so that it became more encompassing. In his recommendation, Dr. Harlow recommended that the College could serve two specific purposes: “it would meet Kenya’s needs for all forms of technical education and, during the earlier stages of the development of technical education in East Africa generally, would provide higher level courses available to students from Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar as well as Kenya.”⁵⁹ This recommendation had political significance because it promoted the idea of regional federation. With these modifications the proposal to establish a technical and commercial College in Kenya was accepted by the East African governments.

In February 1951 the Kenya Government applied for financial assistance from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund to start the College. It also invited the governments of Uganda and Tanganyika to lend a hand in the initial capital expenditure. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, James Griffiths, responded to Kenya’s request by making a grant of £150, 000 on the understanding that the College’s courses would be available on an inter-territorial basis and that this College “would be the apex of a broadly based system of instruction and education throughout East Africa.”⁶⁰ On September 7, 1951, the Governor of Kenya granted a Charter to the Royal Technical College of East Africa (R. T. C. E. A.). It was originally thought that this legislation would take the form of a Kenya Ordinance, “but as the conception of the functions to be performed by the College broadened it was considered that the College would be more

⁵⁸ Gershom N. Amayo, “Co-operation in the Development of University Education in Africa, 1922-1970”, Paper Presented at the Historical Association of Kenya Annual Conference, August 1977, 2.

⁵⁹ *Report of the Working Party on Higher Education in East Africa*, July-August, 1955, 8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

suitably governed under High Commission legislation.”⁶¹ With this official permission and with funding from the three East African territories and Britain, the College was set to go. The stone-laying ceremony took place on April 25, 1952 and the construction of what would become the Royal Technical College began. Commenting on this historic moment (stone-laying ceremony) the *East African Standard* had the following to say:

Among the many foundation stones of future policy and practice which His Excellency the Governor of Kenya, Sir Philip Mitchell has laid during the latter period of his service to the Colonial Empire in Africa few will have greater importance in the long run for East Africa and all its peoples than that of the Royal Technical College which he will place in position this morning. The ceremony will mark the climax of a long and often weary struggle to secure early and adequate recognition for technical education as an educational change and advancement necessary in the conditions of the East Africa of today, and particularly important to the future of the African.⁶²

Indeed, this ceremony was one of the most important occasions in the history of East African education because it raised the region’s higher education system by laying emphasis on technical education. Sir Philip Mitchell in his address opined: “The institution of which we are laying the foundation stone today aspires to become in the near future the Royal College of Science and Technology for the whole of East Africa and I hope that the day will come when it will qualify for the grant of a Royal Charter and so achieve the equivalent of University status.”⁶³

At the beginning of 1952 the East Africa High Commission (E. A. H. C.) had agreed that institutions of higher education in East Africa had to be inter-territorial in character. Being one such institution, therefore, the R. T. C. had to meet this requirement. As happened with Makerere, the R. T. C’s administration was put under a regional

⁶¹ East African High Commission. The Royal Technical College of East Africa Act, 1954. Memorandum of Objects and Reasons, 23.

⁶² *East African Standard*, 25 April 1952.

structure, except that this time it was the East African High Commission, not the Representative Council to which Makerere was handed over by the Uganda government. Like Makerere, the R. T. C. ceased to be directly linked to the Kenya Government as soon as Dr. Harlow's recommendation had been accepted. By 1953 it was clear that there would be no impediment in the establishment of the R. T. C. In March 1953, the High Commission made the Royal Technical College of East Africa Order, 1953 with the approval of the Legislative Councils of each of the three territories. Major-General C. Bullard was appointed as the College's first Principal. In April 1954 the East African Central Legislative Assembly passed an Act establishing the R. T. C. This Act repealed the Charter granted to the College in September 1951. In April 1954 the Gandhi Memorial Academy, an institution founded by the Gandhi Memorial Society in memory of Mahatma Gandhi, and the R. T. C. merged so as to offer better service to the people of East Africa. The Gandhi Memorial Society subsequently provided £200, 000 towards the cost of the College buildings.

The E. A. H. C. Act that set up the R. T. C. in April 1954 authorized it to provide: (i) facilities for higher technological training; (ii) facilities for professional training; (iii) facilities for research; and (iv) facilities for vocational training, either in conjunction with any other training or separately therefrom, in engineering, science, laboratory technology, sanitary science, pharmacy, domestic science, industry, commerce, accountancy, economics, arts, art and artistic crafts, either directly or through the medium of connected schools or connected institutes.⁶⁴ The Act discouraged duplication of facilities and encouraged consultation among different academic institutions in the region.

⁶³ *East African Standard*, 26 April 1952.

⁶⁴ *Report of the Working Party on Higher Education in East Africa*, July-August, 1955, 10.

The R. T. C. opened its doors to new students in 1956 at the edge of Nairobi city. It had six departments: Department of Architecture, Department of Arts, Department of Commerce, Department of Domestic Science, Department of Engineering and Department of Science. Princess Margaret formally opened the R. T. C. on October 24, 1956. The College had 215 students (105 Africans, 100 Asians and 10 Europeans). Between 1956 and 1961 it provided technical and commercial education in East Africa. It also prepared students for examinations such as the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, and the Institute of Chartered Secretaries.⁶⁵ At long last the idea of establishing a second college in East Africa had become a reality. There was still a long way to go before the U. E. A. would come into being, but each step forward increased the hopes of establishing such an institution. One of those steps was the appointment in 1955 of a Working Party on Higher Education in East Africa.

2.3.2 The First Working Party, 1955

Once Makerere had become a University College and entered into a 'Special Relationship' with the University of London in 1949, higher education in East Africa received more attention than had been the case before. In the autumn of 1954 the E. A. H. C. suggested the appointment of a Committee to review higher education in East Africa and assist in planning Makerere College's further development. This suggestion was made following the visits made to East Africa by representatives of the I. U. C. and the A. C. C. A. S. T. The proposed Committee would re-examine the existing blueprint for higher education in East Africa in light of previous recommendations. The Committee

⁶⁵ S. E. Migot-Adholla, "The Evolution of Higher Education [Kenya]", in L. Tembo et al. (eds) *The Development of Higher Education in Eastern and Southern Africa* (Nairobi: Hedaya Educational Books,