

Restructuring at the National University of Lesotho: Prospects and Challenges

By

Prof. Vusi Mashinini, PhD.

Professor,
Department of Geography and Environmental Science,
National University of Lesotho,
PO Roma 180,
Lesotho.
Tel. 266- 22340601
Fax. 266- 22340 000
E-mail. nulgeography@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Since 2015 the National University of Lesotho (NUL) has been embattled in the struggle to do restructuring of the administrative, academic and non academic sectors under its control so as to maximize its efficiency of higher education service delivery. While basic paperwork on these aspects has long been completed, implementation has become an impasse. Therefore the objective of this paper is to interrogate the restructuring at the NUL in order to highlight some of its prospects and challenges for implementation. The paper is divided into five sections. Section one is the introduction. Section two is the overview of restructuring experiences in universities. Section three is a historical overview of the NUL's restructuring efforts. Section four is analysis of prospects and challenges of the current restructuring process since 2015 to the present at the NUL. Section five is the conclusion and recommendations. The paper argues that the restructuring has prospects in that the NUL is the main and oldest university in Lesotho, and is looked up to by the nation to be exemplary in efficiency and relevance. Moreover, it is a public university with resources backup from the Government. Furthermore, the external neoliberalisation of higher education environment offers opportunities for donor partnerships for restructuring. Lastly, it would help NUL produce students suited for the 4th industrial revolution challenges. Challenges are that the restructuring lacks political support from the Government to approve its policies; there are no financial resources for it; there is attrition of senior staff; and poor stakeholders' participation, interalia.

Keywords: Higher Education; Restructuring; National University of Lesotho; Lesotho.

1. Introduction

Restructuring is common in higher education institutions all over the world today. In Lesotho, the National University of Lesotho has joined this endeavour and repeatedly made attempts at restructuring since 2001 to the present without success. The latest trial is ongoing since 2014 when the new Vice Chancellor came into power. However, its success in implementation is hitherto gloomy. Therefore, this paper uses desktop methodology and key informant interviews in the management and teaching staff to critically analyse the NUL restructuring exercise in order to highlight issues and modalities that need to be strengthened or avoided by both the NUL itself and other institutions which intend to embark on restructuring.

2. Restructuring Universities: An Overview

Currently restructuring has become a buzzword in the management of university institutions worldwide. The meaning of restructuring varies among authors. The Cambridge Dictionary online (nd) defines it as “to organize a company, business, or system in a new way to make it operate more effectively”. It is organisational change or reform in order to reposition an organization or institution to cope with its current social, political, economic especially financial and technical environment which informs its mandate, expectations, requests, market and challenges, in a strategic and more efficient manner. This can be done through what (Kamarudin 2017, 12) calls first order and/ or second order restructuring. The first type entails making cosmetic, superficial or light changes to some aspects of an institutional structure or function; while the latter involves making major, deep structural and functional changes to an organisation.

Universities undertake restructuring because of many reasons. Financially, the current financial meltdown has impelled government funded universities to experience cuts in subventions, and this has made them to explore stricter ways of budget management. Private universities on the other hand, have been motivated by the desire to generate more profit from selling higher education service by increasing fees and exercising stricter fiscal controls for operational costs. Concerning administration, universities are urged to change from offering higher education as a public good but to marketise it by charging higher fees and adopting corporate management styles typical of industry towards the workforce. Universities sometimes find that the programmes they offer are old and do not equip students with skills required in today’s market by employers. Therefore they restructure to change old programmes and introduce new ones which suit and are relevant to the challenges of today’s world (Gumport 2000, 67-70; Kamarudin 2017, 11; FitzGerald 2003, 3).

The Hanover Research Council (2009, 4) makes six recommendations on restructuring which apply to most restructuring exercises worldwide, namely, curriculum restructuring to enable interdisciplinary and intercultural links and exchanges; merging of similar areas of inquiry and/ or units; reconsideration and configuration of old institutional lines along the faculty mode; encourage students innovation and scientific inquiry and participation; preparation of students to be marketable, and facilitation of intra and inter institutional collaborations. Therefore in the pursuit of the above imperatives, interalia, restructuring by universities is typified by three major categories, namely, academic restructuring, administrative restructuring, and non academic restructuring. This paper focuses on academic and administrative restructuring only. Academic restructuring deals with facing out old programmes and courses and introduction of new ones deemed relevant to the latest trends in the subject, discipline or area of specialization based on market relevance and demand.

The training offered in the new courses and programmes also includes the use of the latest methods and technologies of delivery of the subject matter especially, but not exclusively, cyber related technologies. Furthermore it entails increasing the efficiency of the academic staff itself through academic staff development via pursuit of higher degree qualifications and regular on the job training programmes (FitzGerald 2003, 6).

Administrative restructuring itself focuses on management aspects of universities. It entails top academic management issues from heads of departments, deans of faculties, directors of institutes and centres, students' management, overall secretariat/ registrar issues, human resource management, financial resources management and technical strategic policy directions of the universities in line with and guided by a corporate business style management model (FitzGerald 2003, 8).

Restructuring universities has many problems as well. The first is that it has become unpopular among students for introducing increase in tuition fees and thus promoting the commoditisation of access to higher education beyond affordability by poor households. The second problem is that it is expensive and requires increase in government financial subventions in public universities, which is however decreasing in many poor countries. Therefore new programmes become partially implemented and/ or unimplemented due to lack of funding. The third problem is that it calls for the need to devise turn around strategies by universities to become entrepreneurial and self financing via their own income generating innovations. This calls for the establishment of partnerships with the private sector and the public via the private and public partnership (PPP) model. This model is, however, not very easy to put into practice due to reluctance from the private sector which blames it as restrictive to profit making (Gumport 2000, 71-73).

The fourth challenge is that restructuring often involves retrenchment of some employees if they are deemed to be redundant or inefficient. Other employees sometimes resign in large numbers ahead of such retrenchment. Therefore restructuring is characterised by strikes and contestations by employees of universities and staff shortages which may create unstable working environments for efficiency of production of quality higher education (FitzGerald 2003, 7-8). The fifth problem arises from resistance by faculties because it ushers in change from established culture of work and comfort zones (Bealing et al. undated, 5).

The sixth problem is restructuring affects many stakeholders within the universities and also its external multiple stakeholders. All of these stakeholders need to be given enough consultation and room for full instead of partial participation in decision making, policy formulation, planning and implementation of the restructuring process. Failure to do so often creates ineffective restructuring appreciated by the management of the universities that restructure but not so much appreciated and supported by its development partners in the policy making, financing and consumer market sectors (Hanover Research Council 2009, 13; Gumport 2000, 68; Kamarudin 2017, 198). Lastly, but equally important is the legal and political support that restructuring must get from the government if it is a public university. The restructuring request and modus operandi need to be submitted to and approved upfront not belatedly by the government. Failure to observe this protocol by a public university might lead it to end up doing an illegal restructuring which can be called off instantly by the government at later stages of implementation.

3. History of Restructuring at NUL: A Précis

NUL has made several attempts at restructuring before without success. According to Mushonga (2017, 110) cosmetic restructuring was attempted between 1997 and 2000 under the Vice Chancellorship of Professor Maboe Moletsane who, having been appointed by the then Government from the then University of QwaQwa (UNIQWA), introduced measures to promote quality assurance via personal appointments of deans and senior staff to drive educational change and performance at NUL. Further changes were interalia, the use of senate executive composed of deans whom he had appointed to short circuit use of senate which is the statutory organ on educational management at NUL. This experiment was strongly contested by the academic staff union as being non consultative, biased in favour of expatriate staff appointed to senior posts and non statutory in the use of senate executive. Both the vice chancellor and his restructuring succumbed to pressure and rejection and it was abandoned after he pre-terminated his contract in 2000.

Mahao (2003, 4-11) and Mushonga (2017, 188) concur that the biggest restructuring by NUL was done between 2002 and 2003 through the NUL transformation process under Professor Tefetso Mothibe's Vice Chancellorship. Mahao (2003) states that the transformation process sought to make changes in educational programmes via, interalia, introducing new courses and program offerings, massification of intake, new consolidations of academic structures, interalia. It also sought to make administrative changes via making executive deans and heads of schools, introducing two Pro Vice Chancellors, implementing cost containment at the bursary and all expenditure units, income generating activities, retrenchment of redundant staff, introducing a new contract based on Patterson scale, and so on. Mushonga (2017, 114) argues that transformation was unsuccessful due to disagreement between administration, employees, community and government on priorities and strategies it used, especially, the Government that terminated it unilaterally. Mahao (2003, 11) states that while there were technical and financial challenges, its success largely depended on a culture of embracing change which was poor at NUL. Bottom line is the government through the Minister of Education then, wrote a very short letter to the Council and Vice Chancellor abruptly instructing them to terminate the transformation forthwith because it was not approved by the Government and was therefore illegal (Kingdom of Lesotho 2003).

The third restructuring experiment took place between 2011 and was earmarked to go until 2015 under the Vice Chancellorship of Professor Sharon Siverts. This process also sought foster financial, administrative and academic efficiency at NUL. Specific focus was to make academic changes by reorganizing faculties and departments, making deans of faculties and heads of schools executive; while departments were to become programmes with chairs, scrapping old courses and introducing new ones which are market based, closing redundant institutes and making new ones, interalia. Administrative reforms were to make three Pro Vice Chancellors, implement large scale retrenchment of redundant and inefficient staff, cost containment, income generation, marketisation of university services to employees and community, privatization of university assets and some components under outsourcing programme, interalia. Leduca (2013, 18-27) argues that the restructuring failed due to lack of consultation with all stakeholders, especially within NUL itself from design to implementation. Mushonga (2017, 197 -221) maintains it was due to disagreements between NUL management, labour via trade unions of NUL employees, the community and Government. Pressure exerted by employees especially, made Professor Sharon Siverts to resign in

September, 2013 ahead of the end of her contract and the restructuring effectively died with her resignation.

4. The Current Restructuring Process at NUL since 2015: A Descriptive Synopsis

On the 13th November, 2014 the NUL got a new Vice Chancellor who, soon after assumption of duty, started to put a restructuring process in place. The justification for this restructuring which the Vice Chancellor calls a 360 degrees transformation is to put NUL on par with its peer universities in the region, to improve NUL ranking which in 2015 was 166 in Africa, to modernize academic programmes, effect cost containment, become competitive and attract more international students, interalia (Mahao interview in Lesotho Times 2016). This restructuring, also referred to by the management as repositioning, is captured aptly in the NUL Strategic Plan 2015-2020 (NUL 2015a, 12-13) which recommends that “The National University of Lesotho must reposition its academic, administrative and business architecture”. It goes on to state that:

“The repositioning will focus on the following thrusts:

- Significant growth in enrolments to meet the growing need for higher education in Lesotho and the region
- Significant expansion and modernisation of its programme offerings to respond to national and regional socio-economic needs and to reclaim a fare market share in local and regional higher education
- Effective and efficient enhancement, deployment and management of its human, financial, physical and technological resources to achieve optimal output
- Strong institutional autonomy and enhanced corporate governance.” (NUL 2015a, 12-13).

In the pursuit of the above imperatives the restructuring is focused on 3 areas, namely academic restructuring, administrative restructuring and non academic restructuring.

4.1. Academic restructuring

This deals with multiple issues pertaining to the academic aspects of the NUL. Major activities are firstly, to do programmes reviews in which faculties and each department under them review their courses and programmes and the old courses and programmes are eliminated and replaced with new market driven and technologically relevant ones in each department. Secondly, where some old courses are retained, departments are to ask their lecturers to review, update and revise their packaging in terms of course outline structures and content. The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is tasked to provide training to lecturers on how to do this correctly. Thirdly, market demand is strongly advocated to be used as the guiding barometer for which, where and how courses and programmes are to be reviewed, revised, discarded and replaced.

The fourth issue under academic restructuring is the massification of student intake in the programmes and the NUL as a whole to double its size to about 20, 000 by 2020. This is done to enhance the effectiveness and economies of scale of resources committed per course and programme offerings. Especially because under the Higher Education Act 2004 all courses and programmes are to be accredited by the Council on Higher Education (CHE); and the accreditation process is expensive and tedious so each course has to be self financing to meet its accreditation costs. Fifthly, departments are to encourage their lecturers to use and induct their students in the use of modern technologies and methods of instruction and learning. The CTL is tasked to impart basic training in these technological skills such as, interalia, the use of intranet system driven by Thuto.

Thus both lecturers and students alike get regular training on the use of Thuto for various academic purposes throughout the year from the CTL. The sixth task is the semesterisation programme in which departments change courses from being yearlong or continuous courses to being semester courses with possibilities for students to take first semester courses they failed in the December examinations either during the second semester along with their other semester course load and those failed in the second semester taken during an new additional third session offered between end of May to July.

The seventh activity is to increase the postgraduate footprint of NUL by mounting more masters and doctorate programmes and their student intake in order to maximize its research participation and intellectual productivity of senior academic staff. The eighth activity is to promote the open and distance learning (ODL) mode of education offerings in order to increase the outreach of its academic footprint and student participation in enrolment and learning out of the classroom. The ninth focus is on improving the incentives and encouraging academic achievement such as doing further study especially at doctorate level, and publications record, interalia, through a review and revision of the academic promotions criteria to make it intensive but navigable up the academic ladder to better the NUL and lecturers' academic ratings (Mahao interview in Lesotho Times 2016).

The tenth focus is to reorganize the academic structures of NUL away from being grouped into faculties and departments to a new structure based on faculties and schools. This entails realignment and integration of some departments away from their present faculties and into different new colleges and schools. The eleventh focus is on the abolishment of some old institutes and introduction of new ones deemed relevant to the market and national demand. To this end, two institutes namely Institute of Education and Institute of Southern African Studies have been officially terminated and new two ones introduced, namely, the NUL Water Institute which is tasked to do research and postgraduate programmes on water issues. And the Moshoeshoe 1 Institute for Leadership which is tasked to promote leadership issues research and training. Lastly, the other academic focus is on the establishment and promotion of NUL's research and innovation acumen and footprint. To this end the NUL research and innovation incubation centre has been established and opened to encourage and coordinate innovation initiatives by staff and students and to market their products to the outside as NUL brand in the market. This makes NUL to undertake interface of academic research with industry and place it as an entrepreneurial rather than an academic university (Mahao interview in Lesotho Times 2016).

4.2. Administrative Restructuring

This category has a focus on many areas too. The first area is the formation and use of the senior management team (SMT) composed of deans of faculties, directors of institutes, librarian, directors and senior officers of administrative and non academic units at NUL. The SMT was formed in November, 2014 and supports the Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor and Registrar in the making of collaborative management and operational decisions on all aspects of the university and to plan, implement and monitor these decisions (NUL 2014). Therefore it meets at least once every two weeks to review progress and receive new reports to make decisions upon and plan the way forward. The second area is the formulation and the use of the NUL Strategic Plan 2015-2020 as the barometer to direct the navigation of the restructuring process and overall management and operation of the NUL strategically and expeditiously between 2015 and 2020. The third is the preparation and use of operational plans at university, faculty and departmental level to operationalise their strategic plans respectively and devise priority setting and implementation.

The fourth area is to streamline academic administration through the establishment of executive deans, executive heads of schools and executive heads of departments. These cadres would be tasked to do administration mainly and little teaching to enhance effective academic administration at all levels. The fifth area is the expansion of Pro Vice Chancellors from one to two. There would be a Pro Vice Chancellor academic to whom the executive deans and heads would directly report under the Vice Chancellor. There would also be the Pro Vice Chancellor Administration and Finance to deal Finance and with administration issues, students and the technical services support and management aspects. All these would handle the three categories of restructuring moving forward (NUL 2015b, 6; NUL 2016a). The sixth area is the creation of a full department and directorship of information technology from the former computer services unit (CSU) so as to boost the strategic position of information technology in university business.

The sixth is the revision and amendment of the NUL Act to bring it up to speed with regulating today's NUL within a globalised world and its challenges (NUL 2015b). The seventh is a focus on introduction of a new contract for NUL staff based on performance management system to regularize their employment and foster their efficiency. The eighth area is the enforcement of cost cutting measures to enforce fiscal controls and savings especially by cutting expenditure. The last area is focus on income generation measures via consultancies, innovations, external partnership sponsorships and seeking increase government subvention.

5. Discussion: Prospects and Challenges

An interrogation of the NUL restructuring process outlined in section three reveals that there are many prospects for its success; and there are also a lot of challenges that have to be overcome to make its implementation successful. This paper analyses these prospects and challenges for each category.

5.1. Academic Restructuring: Prospects and Challenges

Concerning academic programme reviews, changes and their modernisation these are already underway in various departments. Interviews with the Deans show that about 4 faculties - Agriculture, Humanities, Health Sciences and Education - have completed reviews and submitted programmes to CHE. In total about 30 new programmes have been submitted to the CHE for accreditation and some have been given provisional accreditation up to 2023, while others are still undergoing the accreditation process. When fully completed, it will enable NUL to have modern courses with new syllabi and latest programmes in respective departments and disciplines. This would promote NUL's competitive urge in the higher education markets and help it to attract more students. It would also help increase the preference for its graduates in the employment markets. The new programmes have also facilitated external donor/ partnerships support in some departments (Mahao interview in Lesotho Times 2016). However, there remain challenges in terms of how to operationalise the use of marketability as a tool to assess old and identify new courses to introduce. The issues at stake are what is a marketable course or programme? Whose market preferences are to be given priority in effecting programme changes? Since markets are for ever changing where would be programme stability then? At the end of the day, departments find they have to do market surveys among their stakeholders to get answers to these questions fairly for the way forward. But, the challenge is that there is no money with which to do these market surveys, hence they either have to take a blind plunge into the programme reviews and changes which is very risky; or some choose instead not to change but to do course and programme face lifting which

amounts to cosmetic changes only. On the whole the biggest challenge is that there is no NUL restructuring policy to guide various aspects of the components of the restructuring process and provide operational definitions of some critical criteria such as marketability. Different departments use their own intuition and preferences to operationalise marketability.

In the case of massification of student intake, enrolment increased from 9,239 in 2015 to 9,560 in 2016; fell to 9,460 in 2017 and down to 9,263 in 2018. Massification has prospects for the justification of introducing new courses and programmes and their accreditation with Council on Higher Education (CHE) Lesotho. The challenge is that the accreditation costs are very expensive. To do desk review accreditation costs R60, 000 for each new Bachelors Degree programme; R80, 000 per new Masters Degree programme and R90, 000 for each new Doctoral Degree programme (Lesotho Government 2016, 1054). Expansion of teaching facilities is already needed to accommodate massification before it is too late to impact negatively on quality. Closely related to this is the problem that mass intake classes make it necessary to have tutorial assistants to hold tutorials with students in smaller groups on topics they are not clear on, and to do effective marking of scripts. NUL has no effective practice on engaging tutorial assistants, despite a draft policy paper passed by senate sometime in 2015. The requests for tutorial assistants are often not honoured by management due to financial constraints. The result is a decline in quality education because lecturers have to ask multiple choice questions to cope with marking scripts for large classes; some reduce the number of assessments to the minimum of 2 only per course. While the prospect is that there is a NUL workload policy in place now (NUL undated) the challenge is that it is not yet implemented. Another challenge is the absence of speaker phones for teaching large classes. NUL must order these for lecturers and deduct their cost from their pay so that they become their personal property for safe keeping to use at work.

On the use of Thuto intranet as a modern instructional technology, the prospects are high too. Lerato (2019) estimates that 177 training sessions have been given by CTL so far to students and lecturers. A survey by the CTL is needed to assess the Thuto uptake by lecturers. Moreover, continuous induction training on it for staff and students by CTL is imperative to bear fruit.

With regard to semesterisation of courses, committees were established within departments to do it and they then reported to their faculties committees which also reported to a university wide committee in charge of its monitoring and coordination; which is itself divided into 3 sub - committees namely a tasks review/ quality assurance sub-committee; finance and strategy sub-committee; and instruction technology sub-committee. Lerato (2019) argues that by January, 2019 they had met 16, 3 and 7 times respectively since 2017 when they were established. However, coordination of activities among them is not clear and needs attention. Interviews with Deans of faculties show that as at February, 2019 semesterisation had been completed by 3 out of 7 faculties – Agriculture, Education, and Health Sciences. In the Faculties of Humanities, Science and Technology, Social Sciences, and Law, departments were still doing presentations especially on modules and regulations within their faculties. The target commencement date for implementation of semesterised courses for first year is 2019/20 academic year. The prospects for the semesterisation are that it would enable students to repeat failed courses within the same academic year and thus reduce cost and time table problems encountered at present where they repeat them in the following academic year. The first challenge is that the NUL did not provide its own institutionally adopted definition of semesterisation. Therefore Faculties are struggling with operationalisation of this concept. Faculties that have completed early seem to have defined it as

merely to break up courses for delivery on a semester basis; whereas those seemingly behind, are instituting structural changes that include modularisation and regulations development. Secondly, it is going to be expensive financially and manpower wise for departments to re-offer the courses for the failed students in the second semester and, especially, the third session which does not exist at present, within the same academic year. The time for the third session is also currently used by staff to take annual leave, without which this would become accumulated leave. Therefore part time lecturers and their payment would be needed to effect part of this new additional session, with implications for cost containment and also quality assurance. Alternatively, staff exchange programmes with other universities might become necessary to establish.

On the issue of increasing research and postgraduate programmes and their intake to increase NUL research footprint and participation there is slow progress. Interviews with Deans revealed that so far Faculties of Humanities and Education have operating doctoral programmes. Agriculture, Health Sciences and Law have new doctoral programmes awaiting implementation in 2019/2020 if resource challenges permit. Faculties of Social Science, and Science and Technology have none. All of the 7 faculties have at least one Masters Degree programme each. The prospect is that the NUL formulated and finalised the NUL Research Plan 2016-2020 (NUL 2017) which guides research policy and priorities for staff, students and stakeholders to use on research issues. Challenges are that since CHE requires that only PhD holders should teach and supervise post graduate students there is lack of senior staff in some departments or they are overloaded with undergraduate teaching where they exist. Senior staff resigns a lot to go to green pastures in private, government or university sectors elsewhere (Mahao interview in Lesotho Times 2016). Moreover, some departments do not have postgraduate offerings because it is expensive to mount them since CHE charges for their accreditation. NUL has to upscale efforts to increase postgraduate intake as envisaged in its NUL Research Plan (2017, 5).

Concerning improving staff retention for quality assurance by reviewing and incentivizing lecturers to get further training, increase publications and better promotions there is significant progress. The NUL Research Plan (2017, 4) shows that 37% of staff had PhD compared to the 50% envisaged in the NUL Strategic Plan for 2020. The challenge is that since then some PhD holders have left for greener pastures because NUL cannot give them enough retention packages. More effort is needed to increase the retention of senior staff with PhD (Mahao interview with Lesotho Times 2016). On promotions the prospect is that the promotions criteria have been reviewed and a new one exists (NUL 2015c). The challenge is, however, that some of the requirements are now stricter. For instance the need to have publications in peer reviewed journals has been changed to in accredited journals under various accreditation houses especially, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa, Scientific Electronic Library Online (SCIELO) and so on. Therefore while the prospect is that this would promote higher ranking for NUL and rating staff, the challenge is that publishing has actually become more difficult for rapid promotion for academic staff due to tighter standards for some. In the case of promoting the ODL mode, there are prospects for NUL especially for part time students. NUL has an ODL policy in place (NUL, 2015d). Moreover, it invited guest speakers from UNISA to address this ODL prospect as well. However, a study of the ODL mode at IEMS by Mokenela (2017: 103-105) shows that requisite infrastructure such as access to computers, smart phones, sufficient bandwidth, and skills to put into effect online learning by both students and staff is still a big challenge to be overcome; and an even bigger challenge is how to roll out the ODL to the Roma main campus by NUL. In conclusion the academic restructuring is, up to now incomplete and a fuzzy muddling through instead of organic

strategic process. Meanwhile the ranking indicators show that while it was 166 in 2015 in Africa, in 2018 NUL cascaded to position 203 on the ranking web of universities (2018) and below top 200 universities in Africa according to the uniRank (2018).

In the case of reorganisation of the administrative structure of academic programmes, old faculties and departments have not yet been removed to make way for being replaced by new faculties and schools; which are in the proposal, namely Faculty of Business, Economics and Law to replace the current Faculties of Social Science and Faculty of Law; Faculty of Human Sciences is to replace current Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Education; Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology is to replace the current Faculty of Science and Technology; and Faculty of Life Sciences to replace the current Faculty of Agriculture, and Faculty of Health Sciences (NUL 2016b, 3-4; Mahao interview in Lesotho Times 2016). Administrative culture is hard to eradicate, and institutional power contestations are at play. There is resistance to this change, and management seems to be content with allowing the status quo up to now. Therefore the new four faculties and their schools have not yet been put into operation. Moreover, the revised NUL Amendment Bill 2015 which regularises them by empowering NUL Council to allow them is not yet approved by the Government (NUL 2015b, 7 & 21). On introducing the new Institute of Water, Institute of Energy and Mosheshoe1 Leadership Institute the prospects are that these are justified in the NUL Research Plan as being the drivers of the expansion of the research footprint and participation. They are also drivers of the implementation of the thematic research areas identified as niches by the NUL Research Plan (NUL 2017, 8-10; Mahao interview in Lesotho Times 2016). The Institutes are up and running already with each having a Director in place but waiting for appointment of support staff. The institutes also offer degrees especially at postgraduate level and will expand postgraduate degree programmes offerings by NUL and in specialized fields. The challenges are legitimacy of these institutions since the proposed NUL Amendment Bill 2015 in which they are to be given statutory power is still not approved by the Government yet. The other challenge is that of non availability of resources to implement their programmes. NUL will have to work hard to source funding and partnerships for their support.

5.2. Administrative Restructuring: Prospects and challenges

Concerning the use of the senior management team as the driver of the restructuring process this has the prospects that its composition is from heads of all sectors in the university, therefore it cuts across all and is inclusive. The size also makes it manageable and easy to mobilize quickly to address critical emerging issues to be firebrigated. Its bi-weekly regular meetings also ensure that it is structurally embedded into the management timetable via the almanac of events of NUL for monitoring issues. The challenge is that it is executive in behaviour, and hence non consultative with and non participatory of the lower ranks. It operates on the principle of representative executive democracy which is de facto no democracy at all but authoritarianism in disguise. Therefore sometimes decisions taken at SMT level do not reflect and/ or resonate with the views of the faculty membership and create disagreements within it with it. The biggest challenge is that SMT is non statutory and therefore has no legal standi. However, if SMT is found useful for administrative expediency, it must be statutorily regulated to give it recognition and power to drive institutional change at NUL.

Closely related to SMT is the Senate executive which is composed of all the deans of faculties, librarian, bursar and directors of academic institutes. This institution oversees academic issues on

behalf of Senate and is used by the VC, PVC and Registrar to help take critical decisions on emergency issues which are later ratified by Senate. The prospects are that it is expedient and prudent. And as such helps to drive academic restructuring issues on call even when the university is academically closed. Nonetheless, Senate executive is also a non statutory body whose decisions are sometimes contested by the academic members and their trade union. Therefore it too needs to be statutorily regulated so as to give it legal mandate and power to effectively aid academic restructuring and implementation. The paradox is that despite their strategic importance both of the SMT and senate executive committees are not included in the NUL Amendment Bill 2015.

The NUL Strategic Plan 2015-2020 prospects have been multiple. It has acted as a compass for the restructuring/ repositioning of the NUL. Its seven strategic goals have ensured a comprehensive coverage of the repositioning initiatives and anchored it assail towards safe and efficient academic performance shores. It has also become an instrument for mobilising resource support from NUL partners, community and private sector. Its challenges are that it needs more resources for full implementation of the activities envisaged to operationalise its seven strategic goals; therefore resource constraints such as manpower, financial, technological shortages are still many. As for the use of operation plans many faculties are still working on them, while some departments have not even started yet to produce theirs. In principle when done they would be the basis of a performance contract by individuals to be signed between them and their heads of departments. The workload policy to be used to aid them is already approved. This would be a good tool to exact and monitor efficiency of the lecturers by the heads up the hierarchy of management. There is also the new performance contract that staff members are expected to sign and would be the basis for monitoring, promotions and firing for poor performance staff members. The performance management contract faces resistance from staff who see it as an instrument for punitive measures against staff by management. Therefore, the biggest challenge to operational plans and the performance management contract seems to be institutional culture not to embrace change easily and quickly especially if it increases workload and efficiency by removing comfort zones.

In the context of the effort to introduce new academic administration structures via appointment of executive deans and heads of schools and programmes, the prospect is that this would empower them to become resourceful and to make executive decisions timeously and promptly for their units and cut the long red tape in decision making currently present. This is not yet done because it is awaiting the approval of the NUL Amendment Bill 2015 by the Government to be statutory. The expansion of the Deputy Vice Chancellors in the proposal to be two would also expedite technical administration in that each key sector of the university would have its own PVC as an overseer and advocate at the top level of the administrative rung. The challenge is that their appointment also awaits the approval of the proposed NUL Amendment Bill 2015 by the Government to make them statutory. A major blow is that the Government is taking too long to approve the proposed NUL Amendment Bill 2015 which is meant to regularise all issues to make NUL compliant with today's university expectations and challenges, especially the envisaged restructuring. Another challenge is that there is no official policy paper that rolls out the restructuring process. Moreover, an office of the director of restructuring is missing in the newly created structures. This office would drive monitor and oversee all activities especially academic ones, on restructuring under the Pro Vice Chancellor's office. At present the PVC and VC directly drive this process themselves presumably with the deans of faculties; but the former two are overloaded with administrative duties, while power has not yet been devolved to the deans since they are not yet executive deans.

The other challenge relates to the need for institutional ownership of the restructuring process by NUL. Since its inception, restructuring at NUL is discontinuous; it is initiated afresh by every new Vice Chancellor and dies when he/she resigns, dies or runs out of office term. The office of director of restructuring would also then act as a bridge to ensure continuity across Vice Chancellors' terms of office, and promote institutional ownership of the restructuring, its embeddedness and continuity of its implementation by NUL. This office would also help to do monitoring of the roll out strategy/ operational plan via annual and midterm evaluations which are lacking at present. The incumbent Vice Chancellor's expiry of contract is due in November, 2019. This departure will pose a challenge that the present restructuring process might stop with his departure as usual. NUL will have to work hard to avoid this discontinuity syndrome.

In the case of cost containment measures, the NUL is under pressure to effect these due to declining government subvention. Mahao (2018) states that while in 2008/2009 it was R135 million, in 2017/2018 it had declined to R110 million which was further cut by 10 % to be R99 million in the 2018/2019 financial year. This is against the backdrop of an estimated R300 million required by NUL to function at best. Therefore a number of cost containment measures have been put into effect by the Bursary on transport, leave payments, bonuses, and travel to conferences, research budgets, and stationery and so on. These have the prospect to lower cost expenditure. However, the challenge is that in some cases cost expenditure has remained the same or escalated such as, for instance, purchase of expensive executive vehicles for senior management meant to be at par with those of their counterparts in the civil service and/ or private sector, while a lecturer struggles to get stationery for teaching due to budget cuts. NUL continues to run a completely free access bus shuttle service by 2 buses daily to and from Maseru to Roma for 35 km single trip fully paid for and serviced by the university and so on without any inclination towards levying at least a part payment by the commuters, interalia (Mashinini & Makatjane, 2015).

Concerning income generation, the NUL has made achievements. The VC has aggressively embarked on the agenda to seek external partnerships and funding for NUL since coming into office and has attracted funding which has enabled, interalia, supply of some infrastructures like computers with the Central Bank of Lesotho; equipment and operational tools for the disabled with Sekhametsi Company; and bigger funding for the establishment of an NUL industrial park from the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) to kick start it. Success has been achieved in the launch of the NUL Innovation Hub as the NUL research, business and innovation heart sponsored by the Metropolitan Lesotho Insurance Company to link academic excellence with the government and private sector to promote the Triple Helix model to reposition and enhance NUL's role as an entrepreneurial university. Ten business projects are currently housed and promoted by the Innovation Hub; and when they find their footing they will proceed to the NUL industrial park to be established as fully fledged industries producing for the market. More partnerships to fund new innovations are highly needed (NUL, 2019). In general, the challenge remains that funds are not flowing in as much as is the work to be done in the restructuring/ repositioning endeavor; therefore more financial resource mobilisation needs to be done for more success.

6. Conclusion

This paper concludes that there are lot of prospects that NUL stands to gain from the ongoing restructuring process such as new market oriented and accredited programmes; increased postgraduate offerings; more student intake; competitiveness; cost containment; and increased partnership with private and public sectors, interalia. However, there are challenges that make slow

progress such as, among others, shortage of funds, slow academic programme changes, poor retention capacity of senior staff, institutional culture of resistance to change, poor private sector response to PPP model marketed for services and apathy towards the NUL restructuring by the Government of Lesotho. It is recommended that, inter alia, NUL must establish the office of director of restructuring to steer the process, establish a monitoring and evaluation time frame and adhere to it, urge speedy uptake of academic restructuring by faculties, become more aggressive to seek more funding from government subvention, private sector partnerships and its own entrepreneurial initiatives, and urge the Lesotho government which has not yet approved the requisite NUL Amendment Bill 2015 since 2015 to do so in order to give legitimacy to the NUL restructuring process and implementation.

References:

- Bealing, W; D. Riordan and M. Riordan. Undated. "Institutional theory in college restructuring: myth or reality?" *Journal of Case Studies in Education*. Accessed from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1057190.pdf> on 13/2/2019.
- Cambridge Online Dictionary. Undated. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/restructure>. Accessed on 18/1/2019.
- FitzGerald, P. 2003. "Successes and Failures of Restructuring, Decentralization and the Implementation of a Cost Centre Approach at the University of the Witwatersrand". A Case study Prepared for a Regional Training Conference on Improving Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Things That Work! Accra, Ghana, September 23-25.
- Gumport, P. 2000. "Academic restructuring: Organizational change and institutional imperatives". *Higher Education*. 39: 67-91.
- Hanover Research Council. 2009. *University Academic Restructuring*. www.planning.salford.ac.uk Accessed on 24/1/2019
- Kamarudin, M. 2017. "Restructuring in Higher Education: A case study in an Australian University". PhD dissertation. Deakin University.
- Kingdom of Lesotho 2003. *Suspension of Expenditure Emanating from Transformation Process at NUL*. Maseru. Ministry of Education and Training.
- Leduka, C. 2013. "Stakeholders Matter: Evaluating Stakeholder Collaboration in the NUL's Transformation and Restructuring Processes." *Lesotho Social Sciences Review*. Special Issue on Higher Education: 6-30.
- Lerato, L. 2019. "The NUL Semesterisation Project: Project Management? A presentation to the NUL Management". 17 January, 2019.
- Lesotho Times Newspaper. 2016. "Massive re-structuring at NUL". *Press Reader*. 26 May, 2016. <https://www.pressreader.com> Accessed on 27/1/2019.
- Lesotho Government. 2016. "Council on Higher Education Fees". *Lesotho Government Gazette*. Legal Notice No. 141. 61(66): 1041-1056.
- Mahao, N. 2003. "Towards Curriculum Relevance: The Reform Experience of the National University of Lesotho". A case study prepared for a Regional Training Conference on Improving Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Things that Work! Accra, Ghana. September 23 -25.
- Mahao, N. 2018. We're facing a meltdown. Interview with staff reporter of *The Post Newspaper*. 11 May, 2018.
- Mahao, N. 2019. Vice Chancellor's address to the NUL Congregation on 27th February, 2019. Roma. NUL.

- Mashinini, V. and Makatjane, T. 2015. "Funding in Higher Education institutions and Quality Assurance: A Qualitative Treatise of Some Selected Strategies by the National University of Lesotho". *Lesotho Social Sciences Review*. 19(1& 2): 22-46.
- Mokenela, P. 2016. "The National University of Lesotho in the 21st Century Education: A case Study of the Institute of Extra-Mural Studies' Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Programmes". In National University of Lesotho (2016): Proceedings of the conference: From Pius XII to National University of Lesotho: Seventy years of contribution to Development, Education, Research and Political Activism, 1945-2015. Roma. 29th – 30th October, 2015: 91- 99.
- Mushonga, M. 2017. "Government, Community and the University in Africa Today: The Case of The National University of Lesotho". PhD dissertation. University of the Free State, Bloemfontein.
- National University of Lesotho. Undated. *Final Draft Academic Workload Policy*. Roma. NUL.
- National University of Lesotho. 2015a. *The National University of Lesotho Strategic Plan 2015-2020*. Roma. NUL.
- National University of Lesotho. 2016a. *Proposed Administrative Structure*. Roma. NUL.
- National University of Lesotho. 2016b. *A Proposal to Re-organise Academic Units*. Roma. NUL.
- National University of Lesotho. 2017. *The National University of Lesotho Research Plan 2016-2020*. Maseru. NUL.
- National University of Lesotho. 2015b. *National University of Lesotho Draft Bill 2015*. Roma. NUL.
- National University of Lesotho. 2015c. *Policy for Open and Distance Learning in Dual Mode*. Roma. NUL.
- National University of Lesotho. 2015. *Revised Promotions Criteria*. Accessed on Thuto from www.nul.ls . On 19/1/2019.
- National University of Lesotho. 2014. *Establishment and Inauguration of Senior Management Team*. Circular REF: / REG/ADM-1.5-2014/27. Accessed from <https://www.thuto.nul.ls/> on 19/1/2019.
- National University of Lesotho. 2019. King Letsie III inaugurates the NUL Innovation Hub. Accessed from www.nul.ls. 18 November, 2018 on 13/2/2019.
- Ranking Web of Universities. 2018. Africa. www.ebometrics.info/en/Ranking_africa?page=2 . Accessed on 27/1/2019.
- UniRank 2018. Top 200 Universities in Africa: 2018 African University Ranking. <https://www.4icu.org/top-universities-africa/> .Accessed on 27/1/2019.