

## **Key Role of Higher Education in the Development of Africa**

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I believe one of the main reasons for Africa's level of underdevelopment has been the weakness of the higher education sector. All too often universities and other institutions of higher learning have not been able to solve many of the urgent problems facing Africa. The reasons for this are manifold. There appears to be a historic conflict between governments and universities for example. Thus even when universities and research institutes do excellent research, this work may not be taken into consideration by the political and economic decision-makers in their countries. On the other hand, little or no research has been done by medical schools and research laboratories in Africa on cures for HIV/ AIDs, for example a scourge which is afflicting Africa worse than any other continent. One would expect that the continent most afflicted by the scourge would also be in the forefront of research on a cure, but this is certainly not the case. This may be due to the chronic underfunding of research all over Africa. Another problem may be that African universities concentrate more on theoretical rather than applied research. Similarly they may concentrate more on theory and less on application in their training courses. Because the arbiters of content and quality are outside of Africa, research and training programmes may be geared to objectives and indicators which are developed outside of Africa. These may not be sensitive or applicable to the real situation in Africa.

Another critical challenge is that the number of people with tertiary education in Africa constitutes a tiny minority: generally between 1 and 3% of the age group. It is not surprising that when those with university education constitute such a tiny minority, they may not have the critical mass to influence what happens in their countries. One challenge is to increase the number as well as the quality of the graduates over the next decade. Even a doubling of the numbers bringing Africa to the levels of South Asia would be a major achievement.

The introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and of distance education into higher education can help to improve enrolments, relevance and quality. Integrating ICTs and distance education into conventional courses can also make higher education more flexible and cost effective. Older students and married women can be better catered for when the system is more flexible.

It is recognized that in most African universities and colleges, there are fewer women than men. This is not only an equity issue, but a developmental one, as the low participation of women in development and leadership roles constitutes a serious drawback to development.

One of the most important challenges facing Africa today is to ensure that universities and other higher education institutions play a more important role in the various areas of development in their countries and in the region. Unless they can rise to the challenge, Africa's development will remain stymied.

# Some Thoughts about African Universities: The Quest for High-level Manpower

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## *Introduction*

Universities and other institutions of higher learning are established to disseminate and advance socially beneficial knowledge, skills and values. These desirable sets of knowledge and skills required for modernizing African societies and for improving the standard of living of the people are acquired in institutions of higher learning. Hence, institutions of higher learning prepare and produce individuals who can tackle complex problems encountered by the government, the non-government organizations and the public, at large.

## **Problems of Higher Education in Africa.**

The key problems in education in Africa are overcrowding, poor facilities under which the vast majority of Africans receive their education and training. This paper examines two major issues, briefly: firstly, student enrolment and university output and secondly, the quality of education.

### **1. Student Enrolment and University Output.**

**Student enrolment.** Following independence, African governments gave enthusiastic support to higher education and spent generously on them. As a result, spectacular growth of universities and enrolments took place. For example, in Nigeria, the number of universities increased from 1 in 1948 to 34 in 1992 (UNESCO, 1995, p.102). In fact, it is acknowledged that as recently as between 1970 and 1988 Sub-Sahara Africa “witnessed higher education explosion in universities than in many other part of the world” (ibid.).

Enrolments for institutions of higher learning increased from a few thousands in 1960 to more than 800,000 in 1988 (UNESCO, 1991, p. 94). The proportion is astonishingly high today - the South African Universities alone had an enrolment of 351,746 students in 1995 (Probert and Munro, 1995). Similarly, in 1960 and in 1983, universities and colleges in Africa graduated about 1,200 and 70,000 degree and non-degree holders, respectively (World Bank Report, 1988, p. 70).

**University output.** Although reliable data is somewhat hard to come by, information obtained from different sources suggest that the number of graduates from African institutions of higher learning in recent years is remarkably high, so much so that it has created growing problems of unemployment and under-employment among graduates. This is interpreted to mean that a rising rate of unemployment among university graduates coupled with economic stagnation and rapid population growth is turning into a major social problem and obstacle to development in many African countries

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But a point worthy of note is the realization that successive waves of economic crises and political turmoil in Africa have severely affected the capacities of governments, non-government organizations, and industry and business sectors to employ university graduates. Moreover, although there is apparently an excess of graduates in some disciplines, there is a scarcity of well-trained manpower in others. In fact, the number of high-level manpower needed is so high that the universities have been unable to provide adequate numbers. According to one report, there are indications that Sub-Sahara Africa "has fewer scientists and engineers per million of population than any other region in the world" (UNESCO, 1995, p. 103). Because of this, the demand for graduates in scientific and professional fields of study is still high in several government ministries and NGOs (Oyen, *et. al.*, 1997, pp. 187-210). In particular, those university graduates who are involved in research and capable of understanding the latest technological advances and ultimately adopting and applying them to the local production of goods and services are in high demand by the African universities and colleges. But the fact is that such positions are occupied by expatriates whose number is still quite substantial in many institutions of higher learning, in government offices and in NGOs (World Bank Report, 1989, pp. 81-84).

Shortage in high-level African manpower is also the consequence of another serious factor - brain drain - migration of skilled people to other countries. According to the World Bank report, the USA and Europe had more than 34,000 and 70,000 trained Africans, respectively, many of whom are unlikely to return to Africa (World Bank Report, 1989, 83). African intellectuals migrate for many reasons, including the attractiveness of overseas salaries, unfavourable working conditions, escaping persecution or war and political instability and corruption in their own respective countries (Aghion and Williamson, 1998, 143; Cohen and Deng, 1998, pp. 214-223).

## **2. Quality of Education.**

Africa's survival in the modern day context of scientific and technological advancement depends on the ability of its universities to train and use high level researchers, professionals, managers, engineers and technicians. Without high level

personnel, Africa cannot make appropriate choices or apply what it has chosen to its own context. Without such manpower, "there is no choice but to fall behind" (Hallak, 1990, pp. 47-48).

The quality of education is a difficult concept to define. Different individuals view it in different ways (UNESCO, 1997, p. 132). Despite the fact that hard evidence is not available on the standard of African higher education, there are indications to the effect that the quality has been deteriorating since the 1970s (UNESCO, 1991). Reasons advanced for the very critical problem of quality, which has plagued African universities, can be grouped into two main categories:

First, facilities are inadequate, textbooks are lacking or out of date and resources for non-salary inputs (such as building, equipment, research activities, etc.) are shrinking

(UNESCO, 1997, p.233). What happened, for example, in Nigeria and Ghana in the late 1980s remains basically and challengingly true in many present day African universities (Box 1).

### **Box 1. The Crisis of Quality in Higher Education**

The scarcity of funding for capital investment and non-salary operating expenses has seriously undermined the quality of education in African universities. The situation at Nigeria's University of Ibadan illustrates the problem

For several months now we have been expected to run physics laboratory without electricity, perform biology and zoology experiments without water and get accurate readings from microscopes blinded by use and age. Chemicals are unimaginably short. The result of all this is a chemistry laboratory that cannot produce distilled water and hundreds of 'science graduates' lacking the benefits of practical demonstrations.

Ghana provides other examples. At the University of Science and Technology, no equipment for the electrical engineering departments has been purchased since 1962, and most equipment in the civil engineering department dates from the 1950s. Such old equipment, including the university's computer, is rarely in working order; it requires regular routine maintenance, including replacement parts, for which funds are not available. The same university has been characterized as "grossly short of . . . books, paper and food." Similarly, reports from the University of Ghana's faculty of science tell of shortages of chemicals and other consumables necessary for laboratory classes and note that the scarcity of foreign exchange precludes the supply of essential materials from abroad. Lack of funds also means that some universities are operating without the vehicles necessary for field trips and data collection and that others do not have the resources to repair broken telephone systems.

#### Box 1. Cont.

In many countries throughout the Sub-Saharan region, the lack of capital funds has left construction work unfinished on classrooms, laboratories, workshops, libraries and residence halls. A 1981 report from the Nigerian Commission on Salary and Conditions of Service of University Staff states: "The Commission was horrified to witness the disgraceful spectacle of students in the corridors and outside lecture theatres struggling to comprehend the proceedings inside." Reports from the University of Ibadan are also discouraging: "Everything in the University today points to an agonizing decline. Students swarm from their hostels where there are six in a room designed for two, into a dingy lecture room where a teacher shouts his notes across a hall of five hundred listeners".

(World Bank Report, 1988, p. 74)

The second reason for the low quality of African higher education is related to the poor quality of education at the primary and secondary levels. Because of rapid expansion and large enrolment at primary and secondary levels, it has been difficult for many African countries to provide enough qualified teachers, enough school places, enough materials to maintain quality (Hallak, 1990, pl 33). Thus, when students from secondary education join institutions of higher learning, they add new and complex dimensions of problems to those already rooted in the educational programs of African universities.

### **Prospects of Higher Education in Africa**

As it is pointed out above, African universities are in crises in the sense that they are suffering from lack of appropriate educational materials, including textbooks and reference materials, adequate library resources and equipment as well as qualified instructors. As Okuni observed "African governments still fail to equip universities and research institutions adequately to become effective instruments for technological innovations, scientific and industrial research development." Okuni, March 2000, p. 23.)

A major factor contributing to this state of affairs is the chronic lack of sufficient budget for universities resulting from extended economic stagnation in the continent, especially since the days of Economic Structural Readjustment Programs (ESAP) in the early 1980s. In other

words, because the crisis of financial resources is acute in almost all Sub-Saharan countries, tertiary education cannot easily be relieved from its present weak state. Helping hands extended from the international community in the form of financial assistance have not been sufficient to improve the quality of African university education.

The question, then, is how can African countries manage to obtain the needed funds in order to improve the quality of programmes in the short run, and the prospects for economic and socio-cultural development in the long run? This is a perplexing question for which there seems to be no simple answer. However, one effective means to obtain the required saving is to find the courage to bring about profound changes in the way higher education is controlled, managed and financed. In this regard, it is useful to appreciate the advice of the World Bank, which notes that:

. . . savings realized through wise and courageous leadership in any specific institution is a significant measure available for re-deployment in the same institution. Conversely, policies that expropriate savings obtained by sacrifice in individual institutions and transfer them to a central authority for re-distribution will be self-defeating because they destroy the incentive to look for savings (*ibid.* p. 69).

Another effective approach to mobilize additional resource relates to actions to be taken by governments at both domestic and foreign frontiers. Concerning this point, a recent document entitled A New Partnership in African Development (NEPAD), which was approved by the OAU in 2001, has stated that

Domestic resources include national savings by firms and households, which need to be substantially increased. In addition, more effective tax collection is needed to increase public resources, as well as the rationalizing of government expenditures. A significant proportion of their domestic savings is lost to African countries as a result of capital flight. This can only be reversed if African economies become attractive locations for residents to hold their wealth. Therefore, there is also an urgent need to create conditions that promote private sector investments by both domestic and foreign investors.

It is clear from the quotations that until those savings are available there are going to be limits on the quality of education at the tertiary level and ultimately the long-term prospects for economic and socio-cultural development will be curtailed.

The challenge is, therefore, to plan and implement policies and programs that generate the resources so as to achieve the desired end. The value to plan policies and programs of these kinds can maximize the contributions of tertiary institutions toward national development in at least two ways.

1. Preparing the manpower needed to fill high-level scientific, technical, professional and managerial jobs. In this regard, it is instructive to note that *The New Partnership in African Development (NEPAD)* has indicated that African leaders have pledged to support "the immediate strengthening of the university system across Africa, including the creation of specialized universities where needed, building on available African teaching staff. The need to enhance the presence of institutes of technology is especially emphasized." Although the World Bank Report is not in disagreement with NEPAD, it has placed special emphasis on the "preparation of teachers, scholars and managers for the education sector itself, especially for its most advanced teaching and research functions. These people are the most important of national capacity for producing trained manpower, setting standards, maintaining quality, and adjusting the education system to changing circumstances" (World Bank Report, 1988, p. 68.)

2. Generating the knowledge and innovation required for development, through local or regional scientific research and by so doing "providing necessary services needed for development in both the public and private sectors" (World Bank Report, 1988, *ibid.*).

Another point worthy of consideration is associated with setting academic standards. Higher education has become an instrument of national policy. Socio-economic development depends, by and large, on the training of highly skilled manpower and the generation of new ideas by institutions of higher learning. The health as well

as the wealth of a nation is dependent in substantial part on the performance of these same institutions. Thus, Africa's growing dependence upon the services of its colleges and universities is so critical that it calls for the development of a national educational standard policy, which has to be strong enough and viable enough to promote national welfare.

African States must do everything in their power to fight against lower standards of education, especially at the secondary level where the intermediate personnel gets its education and training. These intermediate personnel so essential for economic development include elementary school teachers, technicians, medical assistants, laboratory workers, foremen, secretaries, agricultural assistants, etc. The provision of lower quality secondary education is grave since the preparation and production of high-level manpower at the tertiary level depends on the secondary schools. Failure to maintain high standards in secondary education is dangerous in that, firstly, it denies secondary school leavers to gain admission to institutions of higher learning and secondly, it will have an undesirable effect on the efforts of the universities to provide the kind of knowledge, skills and values that the students will need to discharge their responsibilities well after graduation.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has examined briefly some serious problems militating against the healthy development of African higher education. The huge number of student enrolments, the scarcity of educational materials, and shortage of top level manpower such as high level African teachers researchers, managers, scientists, technicians and professionals have dramatically contributed to the decline of quality in African higher education in recent years. But, the resources, including capital, technology and human skills that are needed to solve these problems do exist in Africa. What is required to mobilize the resources is, as stated in NEPAD, "bold and imaginative leadership that is genuinely committed to a sustained effort of human upliftment and poverty eradication." This is essential if Africa is not to fall behind in the rapidly changing present day world.

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# Achieving Gender Equity in African Universities: Issue of Concern, Recommendations and Examples of Good Practices

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The importance of higher education in efforts to reduce poverty and stimulate economic and social development in Africa is generally recognized. Concurrent to the wide recognition of the critical role women play in sustainable human development, is an understanding of the vital importance of women's participation in higher education, both for the advancement of women in society in general, and for enhancing the contribution of universities to the continent's advancement in particular. Yet fundamental inequities in women's access to and participation in higher education are a pernicious features in most African countries. These inequities are characterized by low enrollment, high attrition, poor performance, and under representation in academic staff of women as compared to men. As such, ameliorating the conditions of women's access and

participation in African Universities has emerged as an urgent priority for educators in the region. Indeed, in its Declaration on the African University in the Third Millennium, the Association of African Universities (AAU) proclaimed:

In order that African Universities should be in a position to fulfill their mission and fundamental obligation to the people of African and to the world community. . . African Universities need to develop and implement deliberate policies to address social and gender imbalances at all levels within their institutions. In this regard, greater access of women to university education, their employment as academics and management staff, and appointment to leadership positions, as well as the introduction or strengthening of curricula on gender studies, should be given special attention (AAU, 2001)

This article presents a brief overview of the issues and conditions related to gender inequities in higher education in Africa, and offers some recommendations for and examples of strategies for promoting and sustaining women's access and meaningful participation in higher education.

## **Some Manifestations of Gender Inequities in Higher Education**

### ***Gender Gaps in Enrolment***

The levels of admissions and enrollment of females at the tertiary levels in Africa vary from university to university but are, on the whole, considerably lower than those of males. Data collected by the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) from selected universities in Africa show that women's undergraduate enrolment in most universities is well below half that of men (Karega, 2001; Masanja, et. al, 2001). For example, during the 1977/1988 academic year, females accounted for 42% of the total admitted undergraduates at Kenyatta University and 19% at University of Dar-Es-Salaam. In Abdou Moumouni University in Niger, only 16% of the total of admitted students were female (Karega, 2001).

In contrast, in countries such as Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland, female undergraduate admission is comparatively high compared to other African Institutions and appears to be approaching parity with males. The reasons can be primarily attributed to the socio-economic conditions specific to these countries. These countries are also characterized by high enrolment of girls at both primary and secondary levels providing a larger and academically stronger pool from which to draw undergraduate candidates (Makhubu, 1998).

### ***Skewed Distributions in Academic Specialization***

Women, in predominant numbers, pursue academic study in traditionally "female" disciplines such as the social sciences, humanities and the arts, and are significantly under-represented in the traditionally "male" disciplines of math, science, technology and business. For instance during the 1999/2000 academic year at Kenyatta University, female students dominated the Home Economics department at 90%, but only accounted for 20% of students at the Faculty of Science (Masanja, et. al, 2001). The same trend is apparent at the University of Dar es Salaam where only 5% of engineering students were women. And at Abdou Moumouni

University, women comprise only 30% of students specializing in Medicine and Agriculture (Masanja, et. al. 2001). At Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, undergraduate female enrolment in the Institute of Language Studies and the Faculty of Science are 19% and 7%, respectively (office of the Registrar, Addis Ababa University).

### ***Disparities in Graduate Level Enrolment and Academic Specialization***

Data from FAWE also reveals that female participation is significantly lower than that of men at the graduate levels. One of the more obvious reasons for this pattern is that low enrolment of women at the undergraduate level manifests an even smaller pool of eligible female candidates for graduate studies. Another, reason is that many female undergraduates simply do not pursue graduate degrees.

In addition to low female enrollment, female academic specialization at the graduate level is biased. For example, during the 1999/2000-year, female graduate student representation in departments of medicine, law, and economic were 27% at Kenyatta University and 31% at the University of Dar es Salaam (Masanja, et. al., 2001).

### ***Under-Representation in Academic Staff***

The presence of women academic faculty and staff is likely to serve as a base for role models for female students and for minimizing the "hostility" of institutions of higher learning to women (Makhubu, 1998). Given the thin base of female candidate from which universities have to recruit their staff, the situation of academic positions for women in institutions of higher education is, unsurprisingly, low. During the 1999/2000 year at the University of Dar es Salaam the percentage of female academic staff was 11%, a figure that actually decreased by 1.5% (from 12.5%) in 1979/98 (Masanja, et. al., 2001). And in Ethiopia, current data show that the percentage of female faculty in teacher training colleges is a disheartening 4%.

Even in universities in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, which typically have high undergraduate and graduate female enrolments, female academic staff have not managed to climb up the ladder to high academic leadership positions as fast as men have (Makhubu, 1998). This suggests a gender insensitive environment for the recruitment,

retention and advancement of female academic staff.

### **Promoting and Sustaining Gender Equity in African Universities: Recommendations and Examples of Good Practices**

The preceding overview highlights the gender disparities in access to and participation in institutions of higher learning. Much of the root causes of these disparities can be traced to fundamental problems and constraints found at the societal, institutional and classroom levels. These include harmful and negative traditional attitudes and practices, gender unfriendly institutional and classroom environment and interactions and gender stereotyping in curriculum and textbooks. Many strategies for increasing the participation of women in higher education have been put forth and are currently being implemented in various institutions and organizations. What follows is a list (although not exhaustive) of recommendations for action and examples of good practices:

#### ***Gender-Disaggregated Data and Qualitative Research:***

A major concern related to gender inequities in higher education is a dearth of systematically collected, documented, and disseminated gender-disaggregated data. In addition, much of the data that does exist are for the most part quantitative and, as such, do not adequately investigate the root causes that constrain women's (student and staff) participation in higher education. Therefore, further understanding the myriad of factors that contribute to gender inequities in higher education in Africa, necessitates collection and dissemination of gender-disaggregated data and of qualitative research findings.

- The University of Dar es Salaam has made a concerted effort to systematically collect gender-disaggregated data on admission, and its staff profile for its annual Facts and Figures documentations. The collection of gender-disaggregated data has been beneficial for bringing to light glaring inequities in women's participation in the university, and has been crucial for problem identification, analysis, the development and implementation of strategies

aimed at addressing the problem (Karega,

2001; Masanja, et, 2001).

- The UNESCO-International Institute for Capacity Building (IICBA) is involved in the study of the low participation of women in education in general and at higher institutions in particular. The impetus arose through the realization that very few women were participating in the teacher education programs the Institute is implementing continent-wide. An ongoing study in Ethiopia is investigating the factors behind and the possible solutions to the gender disparities in the recruitment and retention of faculty and administrators in teacher training institutions, teacher training colleges and faculties of education in Ethiopia. The outcome of the study will demonstrate possible solutions on which IICBA can work to improve women's access to and participation in higher education.
- The promotion of female participation and performance at the university level has and continues to be at the forefront of FAWE's work. In support of this mission FAWE has developed a research instrument designed to collect qualitative data on the following related themes: (1) women's access to higher education; (2) conditions both societal and institutional that impact the retention of female students once admitted; (3) factors that influence specialization in different academic disciplines among female students; (4) patterns and trends in graduation; and (5) women in positions of power and decision making at the university levels (Masanja, et. al, 2001).

#### ***Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Policies:***

Affirmative action and equal opportunity policies in university admission policies, and in hiring and promotion practices are a positive and crucial step toward closing gender gap in higher education. For one such policies are an effective means for promoting equal access of women to education at all levels. In addition, they help create opportunities for women to study and enter non-traditional fields

- Makerere University and the University of Dar

es Salaam have implemented affirmative action policies aimed at increasing the number of female students. The policy is structured to admit female candidates at slightly lower grade point averages. As a result overall female enrolment has increased from about 32% in 1994/95 to 30% in 1999/2000 at Makerere University (Musis & Muwanga, 2000). At the University of Dar es Salaam overall female enrolment grew from 20% in 1979/98 to 27% in 2000/2001 (Masanja, et. al, 2001).

In addition, as a result of its affirmative action policies, several faculties at the University of Dar es Salaam such as Arts, Law, and Nursing have approached or surpassed gender parity in admissions (Masanja, et. al, 2001).

- In addition, the University of Dar es Salaam introduced in 1996/97 a pre-entry programme for female candidates who were not admitted due to low academic achievement. The programme provides six weeks of intensive remedial instruction. Students who pass the programmes examinations are admitted in the university. The increase in females admitted under the pre-entry programme ranges from 6% in some faculties to 56% in others (Masanja, et. al, 2001).

#### ***Gender Sensitization and Social Mobilization:***

A lack of awareness of gender issues often creates an educational environment that prevents women in higher education from achieving their full potential. Universities must make a concerted effort with regards to sensitizing and mobilizing the university community in particular and the society in general to promote an enabling and empowering environment for women students and faculty.

- Makerere University has undertaken a variety of approaches aimed at gender sensitization and mobilization at the institution. One of the key activities was the creation of a Department of Gender Studies that awards degrees in the discipline. The idea was championed by the women's movement in collaboration with women members of staff at the university. With the university administration's support and government and donor investment of resources, the department of Gender Studies is

strong, gender is now taken seriously and skills for gender analysis are in high demand (Masanja, et. al, 2001).

- Sexual harassment in African universities is one of many factors that negatively impact the participation of women in higher education. The University of Natal is an example of an institution that has confronted this issue, in a systematic manner. In addition to the formulation of a sexual harassment policy and the implementation of structures for addressing sexual harassment cases, the university has also embarked on education and sensitization campaigns related to sexual harassment (Similane, 2001).

#### **Conclusion**

Significant, although not sufficient, progress has been made towards improving the enrolment of women in higher education in Africa. However, numerous and complex socio-economic, cultural, political and institutional obstacles continue to impede women's equitable access and meaningful participation in higher education. Overcoming these obstacles remains an urgent priority for ensuring an equitable and non-discriminatory system of higher education. Further efforts are required to eliminate the gender gap in admission, to consider gendered aspects of academic discipline distribution and to consolidate women's participation at all level and in all disciplines, in which they are under-represented and, in particular, to enhance their active involvement in decision-making.

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## **Creative Approaches to the Funding of African Universities: a Brief Discussion**

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### **Introduction**

As we enter the 21st Century, the African university is faced with a number of challenges because it has to be a responsive institution to the needs of a developing nation and yet at the same time be a strategy-focused organisation that has to continually and strategically respond to its changing and volatile internal and external environments. The plight of the African university has now been exacerbated by a number of endogenous and exogenous political, social, and economic challenges facing the Sub Saharan African.

The current waves of globalisation, opening up of markets and the demise of centralised economies, and the establishment of democratic governance have both negative and positive impacts on a weak African State and the university in particular. Therefore, the socio-economic and political problems of the African State, translate into serious challenges for the African university in the following critical areas: funding, students fees and income generation; governance and strategic management of the African university; the quality assurance, equity and academic development of the university; the possibilities and limits of the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the African university; and the role of government in higher education. This discussion will focus on funding of the African university because it has implication on issues of internal and external efficiencies.

If the African university is to survive and prosper, it has to position itself in such a manner

that it embarks on a strategic change and implementation processes that will enable it to initiate reform and cope with forces of, and resistance to change internally and externally. As Beer and Nohria (2000) argue, we have to "break the code of change" in African universities so that we engage with, and reform the current paradigms that frame our concepts of tertiary education and training and usher in an entrepreneurial mindset as argued by McGrath and Macmillan (2000).

My basic argument is that we now have to make strategic choices and paradigmatic shifts in the African academy that will enable us to borrow organisational and management concepts from the world of business and yet still remain committed to the quest for truth, science and the role of the university in the production and distribution of knowledge. As Krogh, Ichijo and Nonaka (2000) argue, we now need to focus on tacit knowledge in the African universities as learning organisations so that: we can unlock the creativity and innovativeness of all our internal and external stakeholders to revive our institutions. Hence, the discussion that Michael Gibbons has started in relation to Mode I and Mode II management concepts is critical in transforming the African university.

### **The centrality of funding and income generation**

Financially, the African State itself is in a crisis. On every economic indicator that one can think of, the African is under performing compared to the developed countries as indicated in Table. 1.

TABLE 1: COMPARISONS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS

	KENYA	MALAYSIA	NIGERIA	S. AFRICA	ZIMBABWE
GDP (Billions)	US\$ 9.7	US\$ 98.2	US\$ 33.4	US\$ 130.2	US\$ 8.2
GDP per head	US\$ 340	US\$ 4530	US\$ 280	US\$ 3210	US\$ 720
Life Expectancy (Men)	51 yrs.	69.9 yrs.	48.7 yrs.	58.1 yrs.	43.6yrs.

Source: The Economist, *Pocket World in Figures*, (The Economist: London 2000)

Therefore, given the current financial crisis facing most of our economies, there is no way in which the African State can continue to fund higher education as it did in the early 1980s. The Zimbabwe Open University receives only 32% of its revenue from Government. The remainder comes from student fees and other sources. It is a well-known fact that the rate-of-returns to higher education are not as high as they are to primary and secondary education. It is therefore, logical that the African state should invest more money in lower levels where the social and private rate-of-returns are higher. In Africa as a whole basic and secondary education is in a crisis as recently demonstrated by Watkins (2000) in the *Oxfam Education Report*. These economic indicators tell a grim picture in terms of the financial base for most African countries which should not be ignored by university management in planning.

As the resource base shrinks, African universities have to be very creative in terms of funding their activities because the quality of our education is being eroded on a daily basis as we lack resources for key activities such as remunerating staff; purchasing equipment and library resources; maintaining existing facilities; and funding research, teaching and learning. Therefore, we need to diversify our revenue base. As argued by Mwiria (2000) we can diversify our revenue base by being involved in creative income generation activities such as establishing short courses that generate income; strengthening our publishing capacities; making use of ICTs to reach more students nationally, regionally and even abroad; strengthen contract research and consultancies in universities especially for local and international industries; cost-sharing and revitalising our alumni funding base.

Cost sharing is very controversial in most countries as evidenced by incessant strikes and university closures due to student's demonstrations.

The example of Makerere University and the University of Zimbabwe in having a two-tier system where some students are admitted because of their capacity to pay fees is worth noting. What has to be made clear to users is that higher education should not be seen as a right but a privilege. For instance, in Zimbabwe enrolments at all levels are: primary (2.1million), secondary (890,000) and Universities (37,000) yet the largest share of the education budget goes to tertiary education. Other means of generating income include:

- The establishment of units and business enterprises linked to the African university but focusing on income generation as is the case of the Rand Afrikaans University in South Africa, Makerere University, the University of Southern Queensland and the Open University (UK);
- Out sourcing non-core activities so that we get rid of units that were a drain on our resources such as student catering and accommodation;
- Offering demand and "customer" driven courses and programmes that require branding, market segmentation, and comprehensive marketing strategies germane to the world of commerce and industry;
- Introducing a dual mode of teaching and learning with a heavy emphasis on open and online learning so that we can make use of economies of scale and tap into the adult learner who has money and is interested in multi-skilling and in life long learning;
- Providing incentives to universities that introduce horizontal and vertical articulation of their courses and programmes to reduce costs and enhance effectiveness; and
- Encouraging private sector participation in higher education as is the case in most African countries.

From a paradigmatic perspective, such reform mean that, the African university must move away from the notion of being a cost centre to being a profit centre. In such a scenario, activity based budgeting, activity based costing, and activity based management should become the norm from the departmental level to the university system-wide level. Our Finance Directors and Faculties should no longer be concerned with managing budgets from government. But they should now be actually involved in the profit centre like their counterparts in the world of commerce and industry. This means that they now have to be concerned with issues of investment analysis and money markets; cash-flows and liquidity ratios on a daily basis; and profit and loss accounts and statements in Departments, Faculties and other cost centres in the university.

In the past, we were never involved in proper costing of our courses, programmes and degrees. If we are to survive the current financial crises, then we must be well informed in terms of our direct costs, indirect costs, cost drivers, variable costs, and fixed costs as far as our activities are concerned. Activity based costing is at the centre of such an approach to managing the Department, the Faculty and the University as a whole. Hence, activity based budgeting and the role of a dynamic strategic plan must become the norm in our management of the African university at all levels.

This also requires different types of leadership in Department, Faculties and in the office of the Vice Chancellor. That leadership has to be results based and cost conscious and utilise the balanced score card in university management especially in relation to linking strategy development, the learning organisation, systems and ICT development, and management control systems as argued by Olve, Roy and Wetter (2000). The University of Zimbabwe and the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa) models of appointing Executive Deans ushers in a new era in university governance that is closely linked to cost effectiveness, productivity, internal efficiency and a very high level of accountability at all levels.

Universities that have introduced appointed deans are also beginning to systematically interrogate the notion of tenure in the academy. While this is a controversial topic, African universities need to

reconsider tenure especially in terms of cost effectiveness and the productivity of academics. Contract appointments and paying staff for nine months as is the case in some American universities offers departments a tool to introduce performance management system and to address the issue of moonlighting in a more positive and win-win manner. Moonlighting can never be stopped. But to legitimise it and actually save money, academics can be employed for a period of nine to ten months on university salary so that they can do their consultancies in an open manner that may assist universities to even develop mechanisms that enable them to get a small percentage from these activities.

## **Conclusion**

This model of university management to enhance the cost effectiveness of the African academy has been criticised in an excellent article by Gibbon, Habib, Jansen and Parek (2001). My answer to their critique is that universities have very little choices at their disposal as far as funding is concerned. As argued by Clarke and Clegg (1998), "In any system that is ecologically interdependent, if you change any paradigmatic part, then you change the whole." If we have to be cost conscious, then we need to relate such an approach of financial management to the way in which we manage department, faculties and the university as a whole. Thus, the concept of flat organisational structures becomes important when cost effectiveness is of prime importance. As argued above, one best tool is strategic management with business plans at all unit levels so that departments and faculties are in synch with an institutional vision and mission.

In our knowledge industry, even the concept of the solitary research scholar needs to be related to the advantages of learning in which research scholars across disciplines, departments, universities and countries become the norm rather than the exception. Therefore, the traditional committee structure and the role of Senate need to be seriously interrogated in light of the need for speed and cost efficiency in making decisions in the university. Most African universities spend a large part of their recurrent expenditure on salaries and very little on areas such as quality assurance and accreditation of courses to ensure a good quality of our products. In terms of modern management, the current situation in our universities is unacceptable.

Therefore, the onus is on university managers to balance the demand for cost efficiency with the future demands that will characterise the university in the twenty first century such as the following: a shift from lecturer centred to learner centred approaches to teaching and learning; utilisation of economies of scale to make university education affordable, relevant and flexible; putting emphasis on life long learning; being creative in utilising the seamless web of knowledge that has been brought about by the internet; offering online teaching and learning which is asynchronous, interactive and collaborative; and being able to meet the needs of diverse learners (Katz and Associates, 1999). What this means is that, the university has to be prepared to continually import and export energy from its internal and external environments if it is to survive that current financial and political crises facing some African countries.

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# Distance Education in African Universities: Rationale, Status and Prospect

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**"Give people a handout or a tool, and they will live a little better, give them an education, and they will change the world."**

## *1. Background*

Education is an important tool in any development effort. In underdeveloped regions such as Africa, education is especially important to fight the many evils of backwardness - hunger, disease and ignorance. Although modern education has been practiced in Africa for decades, the literacy rate in the continent is still low. When we look at higher education, one can easily notice the paradox of the critical shortage of trained human power on one hand and limited access to higher education opportunity on the other. The following data show the severity of the problem in trained human power in the continent.

### Gross enrollment rate in higher education (percentage of relevant age group)

<u>Region</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1996</u>
East Asia	3	8
Europe and central Asia	30	32
Latin America and Caribbean	14	19
Middle East and North Africa	11	16
South Asia	5	6
Sub-Saharan Africa	1	3

Source: World Bank (2000).

As can be seen from the figures, the gap in terms of enrollment among the different regions is high, and enrollment in higher education institutions in Africa is extremely low. The reasons for such gaps could be many. Failure to seek alternative ways and total adherence to the traditional residential system of training could be mentioned as a major reason.

Many countries of the world have been using alternative educational means such as distance education to train their humanpower needs. Research conducted on the effectiveness of distance education in many parts of the world has proven that it is as effective as the conventional approach in producing trained human asset.

Seventy years of research and summaries of 355 research reports have shown that there is no significant difference in terms of outcomes such as grades and test scores between distance and conventional students (Arger 1990). Similar studies by Chu and Schramm (1977) have revealed that students learn as well or better through distance education. As research has proven the effectiveness of distance education, many countries of the world have started using distance education for humanpower development widely.

For instance, according to the reports by Daniel (1996) China TV University enrolls 530,000 degree students in its distance education program in various fields and produces 101,000 graduates per year. Thus, distance education contributes much to the human resource development of the country. Turkey also widely uses distance education to train human power through its distance teaching university (Anadolu University). This University enrolls 577,8400 degree students and produces 26,321 trained human power per year (Daniel: 1996). Despite the limited access to higher education, distance education is not well utilized in Africa. The theme of this paper is therefore, to examine briefly the rationale, status and potential of distance education in higher institutions in Africa.

## *2. Definition*

Distance education is an educational practice where the teaching institution goes to the learner. The teacher and the student are here separated in time/location, and the learner holds greater control of his/her learning.

A number of individuals have defined distance education in different ways. However, the definition of Keegan (1990) is more comprehensive. He has defined it in light of the following features:

1. Quasi-permanent separation of student and teacher: The separation of the teacher and the student for most of the time in most of the study.
2. The influence of educational organization in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of student support service: distance education requires prior registration in a recognized institution (organization) and make use of materials planned and prepared by the institution and get the necessary support.
3. Use of technical media: As the teacher and the student are separated for most of the time, it uses technical media such as print, video, audio, radio, television, etc. in bridging the physical distance between the two.
4. Provision of two-way communication: although the student and the teacher are separated, two-way communication through various media is employed. Such assignments play an important role in facilitating exchange of information between the student and the teacher and in breaking the problem of isolation of the student.

### **3. Rationale**

Distance education opens the door for education for those who, for a variety of reasons, cannot attend regular higher education. For instance, the regular educational systems of Africa have failed to meet the demand for higher education. A report by the World Bank (1988) cited by Jenkins (1989) has indicated that because of rapid population growth and economic stagnation, the gap between the Sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the world appears to be widening. Unless steps are taken to address the serious problems in education, the gap will in time become a gulf. Distance education has a great potential in helping fill the gap by extending an opportunity for higher education for those who failed to get the chance to be enrolled. Jenkins has reported that distance education provides education not only for part-time adults, but also to young students who have not been accepted in to a conventional university or were not accepted in the field of their choice.

Research has made it clear that using distance education can solve the problem of the third world. According to Arger (1990), besides helping to overcome the exploding demand for higher education, distance education is helpful to:

- Avoid the opportunity cost of taking people out of their normal employment for training;
- Reach larger number of individuals (massification of higher education);
- Democratize education;
- Raise educational standards through the use of high quality materials;
- Be cost effective and more efficient than traditional college campus based educational system.

### **4. Current Status**

Distance education in higher education institutions in Africa is at the very early stage of development. The overall participation rate and number of programs and courses offered are small. Jenkins (1989) reported that although Africa has made some attempts in using distance education to extend formal education, so far, few African countries have attempted to provide higher education level training through distance education. Besides, the concept of distance education is novel for the majority of the people including professionals in the realm of education.

The growth of distance education in Africa is constrained by the following reasons.

- Low status is given to distance education.
- There is lack of awareness of the potential of distance education as one of the modes of delivering education to the masses. For example, policy makers, faculty of higher education institutions, and the public at large see distance education as inferior to regular programs.
- There is an acute lack of trained man power in the field in most higher education institutions in the continent.
- Adequate budget is not allocated to run distance education initiatives.

Although, distance education in higher education institutions in Africa is at its infant stage, a few higher education institutions have been successful. The University of South Africa (UNISA) is a good example. It has opened the door for education for thousands who cannot attend regular programs. For instance, in the year 2000 it had 111,758 enrollees. The Open University of Tanzania is another example of distance teaching higher education institute in Africa, which caters for

thousands of needy students. Recent developments in Ethiopia in using distance education for human resource development are also remarkable example in the application of distance education. The Ministry of Education has already launched a big program to train 17,000 teachers so that their skills can be upgraded to a diploma level. The postgraduate level training through distance about distance education initiated by UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building for Africa (IICBA) is a commendable venture. This is a step forward in creating trained manpower in the field of distance education. In the programme begun in 1999, participants from Ethiopia and Liberia have received training on various aspects of distance education. The initiative will contribute very much in popularizing the practice of distance education and helping professionals (such as this writer who was a participant of the post graduate programme) and institutions to conduct distance education in a better way. The Ethiopian Civil Service College has also started a distance education program, which combines both print and innovative technology (that enables it to receive and send image as well as voice and data). The technology installed in the college has Internet connection, which enables professionals in the country to share experience and learn new things from professionals anywhere in the world. This technology has made it possible establish classroom interaction eliminating distance and travel.

### **5. Prospect**

With the increasing demand for training, the role of distance education is getting of paramount importance worldwide. According to one report, at present, there are 986 distance-teaching institutions of different types and sizes located in 107 countries. The number of distance learners enrolled in higher education institutions around the world in the year 1997 was about 50 million. Growing at a very much faster rate, the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions has reached approximately 90 million by the year 2000. It is expected to reach 120 million by the year 2025.

Higher education institutions in Africa are in problem because of shrinking budget. Because of this, they are unable to produce the required human power. Distance education could be one means to get out of the crisis. Thus, the application of

distance education as a mode of delivery for expanding opportunity for education and retraining has become a necessity. In this case, the prospect for distance education is enormous and untapped. Distance education in Africa should be seen as a response to a crisis in education not as an optional extra to conventional education.

### **6. Conclusion**

Distance education is a means of providing access to higher education to the masses. Thus, it should not be seen as a supplementary to residential programmes. It needs to be seen as low cost alternative means to expand educational opportunity. It should be seen as a vital instrument for the production of the required trained manpower. To meet this end, strong backing from governments, NGOs, academics, the private sector and others interested in the expansion of educational opportunity is highly needed.

Whatever development strategy Africa will design is dependent on the skilled human power it will be able to create. The traditional residential programs only cannot create such human power. Africa, in order to meet its demand for trained human power, needs to use distance education. Thus, one can generalize that distance education has a great potential and a brighter prospect in Africa.

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# Association of African Universities

## Summary of the Technical Experts Meeting on the Use and Application of Information and Communication Technologies in Higher Education Institutions in Africa

### Introduction

On the Association of African Universities' own initiative, a Technical Experts Meeting was held at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania between 17-19 May 2000 for the purpose of promoting the use and application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Africa. Several member institutions, experts, scholars and high-ranking government officials participated in the meeting. The Carnegie Corporation of New York and International Development Research Centre (IDRC) contributed financial assistance.

In order to expedite the realization of its basic intentions, the Association devised a coherent Core Program of activities for which the 1997-2000 aimed at helping African Universities to build capacity. Accordingly, the Conference of Rectors, Vice Chancellors and Presidents held in Arusha (Tanzania) in 1999 agreed to utilize the benefits of ICTs so as to enhance learning, research, development and governance activities of an institution. Furthermore, the Conference recommended that:

- *Assessment/survey of ICTs capacities at every African University should be undertaken soonest and within an agreed upon time interval;*
- *AAU is requested to assist any African University that may require such assistance, in developing guidelines for the formulation of strategic ICTs plans.*

The participants of the AAU-ICT Technical Experts meeting recognized the fact that while the higher education institutions in the developed world used the ICTs especially the Internet to communicate, create, disseminate, store and manage information, higher education institutions in Africa have not been part of this global phenomenon. Consequently, it was agreed by the participants of the experts meeting that the AAU should do all in its power to rectify the grave inequalities existing amongst countries of the world as regards to access

to modern information and communication technologies and the development of the necessary infrastructure.

### Objectives of the meeting:

- To identify key issues and questions that discourage African universities from developing and using ICTs
- To prioritize areas of mutual interest and determine aims and objectives that can be attained in the short and long term.

### Proceedings

Completed activities included:

- Literature review and the assembly of background information on the use and application of ICTs in higher education institutions in February/March 2000.
- A moderated on-line discussion organized in April 2000, which involved experts and scholars from African universities, research institutes from Africa, Europe and USA with experience in ICTs.

### Overview of Literature Review and Presentation of Synthesis and Conclusions of the Online Discussion

The literature review was done by Dr. John Daly in which he synthesised the knowledge base of global trends of ICT applications in academic setting. The synthesis report along with other relevant materials were disseminated to about thirty selected international scholars and donor representatives to facilitate their contribution to a three week moderated on-line discussion in April 2000.

The moderator of the on-line discussion, Professor Olalere Ajayi (Obafemi Awolowo University) highlighted the benefits accrued from the development and usage of ICTs in meeting the challenges of higher education provision in the world in general and Africa in particular. He

summarized the on-line discussions report under the following headings

- Functions of a university
- Issues needing assessment regarding current ICTs status and future trends
- Uses of ICTs in higher education institutions
- Case studies of the ICTs development and use
- Major obstacles affecting the development and use of ICTs
- Critical factors leading to success

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### **IICBA-UNESCO Partners with Local NGO to create HIV/AIDS Videos for Ethiopia**

IICBA has recently formed a partnership with a local NGO, called Misericordia Ethiopia, in order to create videos on HIV/AIDS awareness. The creation of the videos is modelled after the success of many of the UN agency organizations videos that have been created in Africa. IICBA plans to use the videos in order to reach school age children and adults throughout Ethiopia.

The videos will be in Amharic language and sub-titled in English. After they are produced they will be translated and local and regional languages will be dubbed in place of the Amharic. This is an excellent way to share the same message with a large number of people.

Due to the fact that Ethiopia has a high rate of illiteracy, the use of video as a form of social media addresses those who may not be receiving information through print media. It is hoped that the Teacher Training Colleges and Institutes will also utilize the videos in order to enhance the preparedness of teachers to handle teaching about HIV/AIDS.

Two videos will be produced. The first video will be a documentary film on the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia, with a focus on "living positively." It will include four interviews, the first with a woman living with HIV/AIDS, the next two with a couple that is living with HIV/AIDS, and finally with an expert on HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. The second video will be a series of short plays in which different scenarios will be addressed. The plays will touch upon various topics related to HIV/AIDS, such as the pressure young women feel to give into having sex, and will allow time after each play for reflection and discussion. It is the hope that both videos will

reach a large number of people and provide an important venue to open up a dialogue about the disease, prevention, and care.

### **IICBA-UNESCO Creates HIV/AIDS Electronic Library**

The HIV/AIDS Electronic Library was created by IICBA UNESCO in order to provide resources related to HIV/AIDS education and policy to teacher training institutions, educators, scholars, students and researchers in Africa. The information contained in the Electronic Library represents a range of topics, including curriculum development, educational methodology, science, biology, sociology, politics, economics and civics. Most importantly, the overall focus of the Electronic Library is to provide usable materials for teachers and teacher trainers in order to complement and enhance existing national curriculum on HIV/AIDS in African nations. The Electronic Library also provides relevant documents for the purposes of HIV/AIDS research.

The resources have been gathered from a variety of organizations and governments, most notably UNAIDS, WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, and various individual experts in HIV/AIDS education. Also included are curriculum plans developed by students and researchers in Africa and around the world.

It is important for African students to be aware of that HIV/AIDS is hitting Africa hardest, while at the same time is affecting the rest of the world. The Electronic Library therefore includes information on the HIV/AIDS epidemic around the world and offers lesson plans from *CNN* and *The New York Times* which provide teachers and older students the chance to read about the epidemic as it affects Africa and the world.

According to UNAIDS:

Prevention and health promotion programmes

should begin at the earliest possible age, and certainly before the onset of sexual activity. They should reach students before most of them leave or drop out of school, particularly in countries where girls tend to leave at a younger age. This means that age-appropriate programmes should start at primary school level.

Recognizing the importance of this statement, the Electronic Library includes lesson plans starting at grade 3 and continues through grade 12.

The specific education topics covered in the Electronic Library are:

- Curriculum Planning
- Gender issues
- Group Specific Materials (including Adolescents, children, Girls, Men, Women, University and Children)
- Lesson Plans by Grade Level
- Policy
- School Health Education
- Teacher Development

The next phase in the development of this series is to test the materials in order to gauge the usefulness and in order to adapt existing and create new materials.

The HIV/AIDS Electronic library has been developed by Allyson Wainer.

### **Post-Graduate Diploma in Distance Education (PGDDE)**

#### *Academic Counselling Workshops*

Two Academic Counselling Workshops were concurrently conducted in Addis Ababa and Monrovia for the second PGDDE intakes from Ethiopia and Liberia respectively. The workshops, which took place in April 2001 focused mainly on assisting students resolve their academic and study

problems.

### **Term-End-Examinations**

25 Ethiopian and 15 Liberian PGDDE students sat for the PGDDE final exams in June 2002, in Addis Ababa and Monrovia. First and second intake students who did not take the final exams in June session, will do so in December 2001.

### **New Students Admitted in PGDDE**

15 Ethiopian, 15 Liberian and 6 Madagascar candidates have been enrolled with IGNOU for PGDDE in August 2001. So far IICBA has managed to get a total of 96 African educators enrolled with IGNOU for the PGDDE program. Madagascar has now joined the list of African countries benefiting from IICBA's capacity building endeavours.

### **IICBA CD ROM and Website Development Training**

IICBA has been training educational specialists in Addis Ababa, Khartoum and Dakar in educational materials production for CD-ROM and the Internet. The intensive course lasts for two weeks. The course director was Mr. Thomas Edwards, a Canadian specialist with 10 years of experience in this type of work. The Khartoum workshop was specifically for university lecturers, and they were able to create their own website after the training. The Addis Ababa workshop covered participants from Addis Ababa University, the Africa Virtual University, the Civil Service College, the Entoto Technical Vocational School, and IICBA staff. Two Ugandans working on a UNESCO training programme for teachers also attended the course. The Dakar course was for staff from a number of educational institutions including IICBA partner INEADE. Participants also came from Burkina Faso and Mali.



