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The Shifting Landscape of Development Cooperation: Repercussions for African Higher Education

Damtew Teferra*

Abstract

The higher education system in Africa is typically an amalgam of European and American higher education models. The system was built through the conception, direct intervention and support of the colonialists before other important players, such as private foundations, joined in. By design, African higher education was expected to become part of the global higher education system – albeit marginally – and without the consent of Africans. Nevertheless, the dynamics of development cooperation has been evolving with the emergence of new global players, the diminishing influence of the North, and sustained economic growth in Africa. This article (i) explores prospects and challenges based on recent developments and past experience; (ii) analyses current and emerging global trends; and (iii) concludes, with views, on what Africa ought to be doing by way of higher education partnerships.

Key words: Africa, higher education, development cooperation, aid, partnership, funding.

Résumé

Le système de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique est généralement un amalgame des modèles de l'enseignement supérieur européen et américain. Le système fut construit à travers la conception, l'intervention directe et l'appui des colonialistes avant que d'autres acteurs importants, comme les fondations privées, ne s'y joignent. De par sa conception, il était attendu du système d'enseignement supérieur africain qu'il devienne partie du système

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mondial d'enseignement supérieur – quoique marginalement – et sans le consentement des africains. Néanmoins, la dynamique de coopération au développement a évolué avec l'émergence de nouveaux acteurs mondiaux, la diminution de l'influence du Nord et la croissance économique soutenue en Afrique. Cet article explore d'abord les perspectives et défis sur la base des développements récents et de l'expérience passée ; ensuite analyse les tendances mondiales actuelles et émergentes ; et enfin conclut, avec des points de vue, sur ce que l'Afrique devrait faire comme partenariats en matière d'enseignement supérieur.

Mots clés : Afrique, enseignement supérieur, coopération au développement, aide, partenariat, financement.

Introduction

With the declaration of independence and the consequent need to develop an indigenous manpower base to run their new administrations, African countries placed higher education at the top of their development agenda. For this reason, higher education institutions were generously funded ; classrooms, laboratories and dormitories were well furnished ; academics were well paid, and students received attractive allowances. Also, support from external sources – bilateral, multilateral and foundations – as well as national governments flowed in steadily during this period which could be termed the 'golden era' of African higher education (Ajayi and Goma 1996; Yusufu 1973).

Nevertheless, this enthusiastic support did not last long as the continent soon became engulfed in the political, economic and social upheavals of the 1970s and 1980s. Critical voices from higher institutions challenging the political leaders triggered negative reactions from governments which began to portray universities as irrelevant ivory towers whose costs were not being fully justified – a veiled reference to the flawed higher education policy discourse at the time (Leslie 1990; Samoff and Carrol 2004; Bloom, et al 2004, 2014). This development marked one of the lowest points in the history of African higher education.

The higher education system in Africa was built through the conception and direct intervention and support of the colonial authorities. It was after the system had been established that private foundations, such as the Carnegie Corporation, Ford and Rockefeller came in to play a direct role in shaping its development. Furthermore, development cooperation agencies from other countries, such as Canada, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United States, among others, have also played an active role

in the development of higher education in Africa (Ajayi et al 1996; Teferra 2009). But the dynamics of development cooperation in higher education has not remained static. It has been evolving with the emergence of new global players following the diminishing influence of the 'historical' partners and the sustained economic growth in the continent.

This paper analyses global trends in development cooperation, particularly as they affect higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa. It further explores the scope and prospect of these cooperation dynamics from the past without delving into the complex discourses of development cooperation theories. The paper deliberately uses 'development cooperation' instead of 'aid' to describe this relationship.

The Molding Phase of 'Development Cooperation'

Higher education in Africa as we now know it is the product of a multitude of external players, organisations and nation states. The colonial powers, in particular, played a major role in formulating, funding and implementing policies they deemed appropriate for the cultural, social, economic and political vision of the system at the time. As Ashby (1966) notes, the British established higher education in a number of its African territories after the Second World War. Within a short period of time, a number of higher education institutions were established through the British government finance – facilitated by the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts of 1940 and 1950 – which made possible, what is largely known as the Asquith Colleges. These included of University College of Ghana, Legon (October 1948); University College, Ibadan (November 1948); Khartoum University College (1949); Makerere College (upgraded in 1949); and the University College of Sierra Leone (1960). Others included the Royal Technical College, Nairobi (founded in 1951); and the segregated University College of Salisbury (established in 1953, but upgraded two years later to become the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland) (Lulat 2003).

In Ghana, the University College – founded in 1948 as the University College of the Gold Coast on the recommendation of the Asquith Commission on Higher Education in the then British colonies – became an affiliate of the Inter-Universities Council, set up by the British Government to advise it on all matters relating to higher education in the new British Colonies. The Inter-Universities Council served the Gold Coast in advisory capacity, but the arrangements also enabled the College to seek support of the Council in obtaining funds from the United Kingdom Government (Acquah and Budu, forthcoming).

In Kenya, the first institute to provide higher education outside Makerere College in Uganda was the Royal Technical College of East Africa, established in 1956. It was founded through the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund with the support of the Asian community. It became the University College, Nairobi, in 1963, and together with the University College, Dar es Salaam, and Makerere University College, they formed the Federal University of East Africa. By 1960, running the Royal Technical College would entail a capital expenditure of £1.8 million and a recurrent expenditure of £500,000 per annum. The British Government provided £800,000 for capital expenditure, while the American Government and other bodies also provided funds, enabling the university college to be duly established in June 1961, with its name changed to the Royal College, Nairobi (Sifuna, forthcoming).

In an attempt to build a good foundation for the modernisation of Ethiopia by expanding the higher education system, Emperor Haile Selassie's government invited a team of educators from the United States to conduct a survey and help establish a full-blown university (Tadesse 1988 in Ayalew, forthcoming). A team of educators from the University of Utah conducted the survey with the financial support of the United States government. The funding support was tied to the development of infrastructure and recruitment of staff from the US to administer the university (Ayalew, forthcoming).

In Francophone Africa, there was a near total absence of higher education until the 1950s. Thereafter the French became more cognizant of their higher education responsibilities in the colonies, prompted in part by the increasing cost of educating Africans in French universities and in part out of a conscious effort to do more to culturally bind the colonies to the metropole in preparation for the eventuality of some form of political autonomy in the colonies (Lulat 2003). France not only took care of staffing the institutions, but was also responsible for their financing, at least into the early part of the post-independence period (Ajayi, Goma, and Johnson 1996). The Portuguese have played quite a limited role in shaping higher education in its African colonies but left their indelible mark on the language of instruction.

In summary, modern day African higher education was conceived and exclusively molded by bodies of external forces – predominantly respective colonial elements – and consolidated through their funding. The rationale of funding the sector, however, is guided by a plethora of factors, but wholly in the interest of the colonial masters. [For a more in depth analysis, consult Lulat, 2003, 2005; Ajayi, Goma and Johnson, 1996.]

To be sure, however, higher education has been in existence in Africa since time immemorial: from Timbuktu in the west (Bagayoko and Diawara 2003), Egypt's Al-Azhar in the North (Said 2003), and monasteries of Ethiopia in

the East (Sergew and Tamerat 1970). The latter two have been in existence for thousands of years now. In fact, Al-Azhar is the oldest university in the world, having been established in the 970s. The aim of this paper is not to dwell on the history of higher education in Africa but to marshal unassailable evidence that while modern higher education in Africa is a product of colonial experience, knowledge citadels of higher learning have existed in Africa long before colonialism. The thesis of this paper, therefore, is that education in its 'highest form' – to make a distinction from 'higher education' – existed in the continent before the Europeans conquered the region.

Theoretical Framework

Donor agencies' commitment to the funding of higher education in Africa appears to have waned over time. The trend appears to be closely linked with the interplay of development ideology, the perceived role of education within that ideology, and the geopolitical position of Africa. Each of these forces has changed with the shifting political and economic climate of the world economy. As such, the reason why donor funding shrunk at some periods and increased at other times needs to be understood within the framework of evolving development ideology (Ilon 2003).

In examining development cooperation, it is instructive to recognise the different theories that shape the discourse. These include the Dependency Theory, Development Theory, World System Theory, and African Renaissance Theory – all of which could be invoked to interrogate the role of development cooperation in the funding of higher education in Africa. Furthermore, and more closely, the centre-periphery paradigm and the recent aid-effectiveness modalities could also be used to establish the argument. The paper is, however, consciously limited to examining the scope and practice of development cooperation in the funding of higher education in Africa without going into the respective development theories and paradigms.

Existing Higher Education Initiatives in Africa

It was once thought that Africa would become less attractive to the rest of the world with the cessation of hostilities between the Cold War rivals (Teferra 2012). Twenty years after, that prediction has proved to be wrong as economic and geopolitical realities have changed so significantly that they prompt the re-engagement of both 'historical' and emerging powers with Africa. As part of that development, higher education in Africa has also re-ignited interest globally. Several fruitful partnerships have been forged on higher education in Africa, including the ones briefly discussed below.

Africa-US Higher Education Initiative

In July 2007, a group of universities based in the United States and Africa met to launch a partnership to help strengthen the capacity of higher education in the region. Towards this end, the 2010 US Omnibus Appropriations bill committed US$15 million to the partnership (http://www.aplu.org).

Canada-Africa Higher Education Partnership

The Association of African Universities and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) also launched an initiative called 'Strengthening Higher Education Stakeholder Relations in Africa'. Its three components included strengthening African university outreach, maintaining strong university-industry linkages, and, strengthening AAU stakeholder relations working in partnership with AUCC (http://www.aau.org).

Southern Africa-Nordic Partnerships (SANORD)

University cooperation between Southern African countries and Nordic university cooperation, known as SANORD, is a partnership of 25 research-led higher education institutions from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, and institutions in Malawi, South Africa and Zambia. SANORD aims to advance multilateral academic collaboration between institutions in the Nordic countries and the Southern African region (http://sanord.uwc.ac.za/).

European Commission-African Union Commission Partnership in Higher Education

The European Commission and African Union Commission are partnering in different schemes to vitalise the higher education sector in Africa. These include the launching of Intra-ACP Mobility Scheme, what is now called the Nyerere Consolidated Scholarship Programme, Harmonisation and Tuning Project, and the Pan-African University Initiative (AUC 2013).

Scandinavian Partnerships

Partnerships between Scandinavian and African universities are probably one of the most sustained and impressive cooperation initiatives so far. Norway and Sweden, in particular, have committed a large sum of funds on higher education development in the continent for several decades, even when support for higher education in Africa had been at its lowest.

Germany's DAAD

For more than two decades, DAAD has been a significant player in university partnerships in Africa. Currently more than 35 partnerships are reported. Ad-

ditionally, five new African centres of excellence and five new international centres of excellence with participation from African Universities are supported (http://www.daad.de). Germany, through one of its other organisations, called GIZ, has been actively involved in the Pan African University working closely with the African Union Commission.

Other 'Historical' Partners

Guided by a variety of objectives and interests, past and present, university cooperation between Africa and its other 'historical' partners abound. These include the Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education and Research for Development (APPEAR), University Commission for Cooperation with Developing Countries (CUD, Belgium), Irish African Partnership for Research Capacity Building (IAP), Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC) and United Kingdom's' Education Partnerships for Africa (EPA).

The World Bank

The World Bank, probably the most prominent player in the African higher education scene, is renowned not for its resources but its flawed African higher education policies. In complete contrast to its earlier position, it is currently involved in major initiatives in Africa building centres of excellence along with other credible national and regional organisations in the region. It is also financing 19 university-based centres of excellence in seven countries in West and Central Africa to the tune of US$ 150 million (World Bank 2014a). Of recent, it has embarked on a new initiative called Partnership for Skills in the Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET), and expanding the centre of excellence initiative to the rest of Africa (World Bank 2014b).

Japan

Japan is taking a strong interest in strengthening its strategic partnership with African countries driven, as some say, by the advanced strides that China and India have made in that respect. The Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V), the largest international conference ever hosted by Japan, designed a framework for contribution to the growth of Africa, through the Official Development Assistance among other initiatives. The Pan African University support to the East African hub in Kenya is also part of this arrangement (JICA document 2013).

The Foundations: The Powerful Interlocutors

The most far-reaching and influential international education programmes after World War II were organised by three key institutions, namely, the Carnegie

Corporation, Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation. The latter two have also been associated with a worldwide network of agricultural experiment stations, ranging from the Philippines to Mexico, Nigeria, and India. By the 1950s, the personnel of the three foundations had concluded that an important obstacle to Third World development was the dearth of trained indigenous leadership. These organisations subscribed to the idea that nation building in Africa, Asia, and Latin America required indigenous institutions, strengthening post-secondary education in a limited number of domestic universities in a few developing nations (Berman 1991: 259).

As the consensus for revitalising higher education was unequivocally made in the aftermath of the rate-of-return debacle – concurrent with major international players recognising its critical role for socio-economic development (Bloom et al. 2006), resources for – and sentiments – about higher education development in the continent have grown. One of the most visible initiatives had been the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa – a consortium of four, and later seven, US-based foundations including Carnegie Corporation, Ford, Hewlett, Kresge, MacArthur, Mellon and Rockefeller Foundations. From 2000-2010, the Partnership provided US$ 440 million to nine African countries, namely, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda (PHEA 2010). This is probably the most significant and visible partnership support ever made to the African higher education sector and is somewhat comparable to the effort made soon after independence, when establishing national higher education systems was top priority (Teferra 2009). Whereas the partnership has ended, the impact of that outstanding collective support has been remarkable.

Despite the end of the partnership, some of the Foundations have continued in their individual pursuit of supporting higher education, including intervening in some critical African higher education issues. For example, the Carnegie Corporation has continued to play a visible role in supporting policy dialogue in doctoral education, management and governance in higher education, quality assurance, mobility of the intellectual diaspora, and higher education research and communication in Africa. It recently supported the African Higher Education Summit held in Dakar in March 2015. With a different strategic vision for the last half-decade, the Ford Foundation has been largely absent from the prominent position it once occupied in these areas; but a different course of action is anticipated with the new leadership.

The Eastern Connection: The Fading Track

The literature on partnership between countries in the former Eastern-bloc and Africa regarding the development of higher education is largely non-existence.

And yet, not only did hundreds of thousands of African students and academics travel to 'freely' study in the institutions of these countries, most typically, in the former satellite states of the former Soviet Union, such as Cuba, former German Democratic Republic (GDR), Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia. But also many from these countries travelled to the region, as part of the solidarity brinkmanship of the time through the support of the respective countries in the East.

The Former Soviet Union

Between 1960 and 1961, the number of African students in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) increased almost ten-fold: from 72 to over 500, eventually reaching some 5,000 by the end of the decade. By 1990, on the eve of dissolution of the USSR, the number of Africans in the country had risen to 30,000, thus representing about 24 per cent of the total body of foreign students (Gribanova and Zherlitsyna in Matusevich 2009). Khanga (in Fikes and Lemon 1992), however, puts the numbers at about 40,000 (1992: 22).

In a particular example, one of the stated objectives of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia – an educational and research institution in Moscow founded in 1960 as Peoples' Friendship University at the height of the Cold War – was to help nations of the Third World, mainly in Asia, Africa and South America, by providing higher education and professional training. The USSR founded the Peoples' Friendship University in 1960, which it later named after Patrice Lumumba – one of the icons of the African peoples' struggle for independence – following his assassination. In the waxing and waning of contemporary politics, the University's name changed again to the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia on 5 February 1992 (PFUR 2013) with the cooling off relationship between Russia and its satellite countries in Africa.

In its intense desire to expand its global influence, the former Soviet Union had targeted higher education in Africa among the key sectors its concurrent strategies were meant to assist. It offered large-scale full scholarships to students from Africa, Asia and the Middle East and made a robust effort that indoctrinated many of them with communist ideology (Staar in Bervotes 2011).

Former German Democratic Republic

A large number of African students had also been sent to study in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) as part of the 'economic socialist assistance', a preferred term than "aid" (Howell 1994). With a preference for countries with a socialist orientation and national liberation movements, the first students came from developing countries of North Korea and Nigeria. According to Heilmann, thereafter, numbers increased rapidly, rising from 5,000 in 1970 to 12,400 in 1989 by which time over 45,000 had completed

their studies (see Howell 1994). For example, Mozambican students accounted for 18 per cent of all African students in the GDR in 1987. The 'economic socialist assistance', which amounted Deutsche Marks 2.2 billion in 1988, committed a total of Deutsche Marks 114 million to 'training in higher and technical colleges' (Evangelische Akademie in Howell 1994).

In terms of academics, over 25,100 experts were sent through scientific-technical and cultural co-operation agreements between 1970 and 1988 to work in developing countries as government advisers, economists, doctors, paramedics, engineers, and teachers. Again, the countries to which experts were sent, such as Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and North Yemen, reflected the underlying ideological and political interests (Howell 1994). By 1988, the total amount committed to the deployment of these 'experts' abroad stood at Deutsche Marks 91 million.

As the geo-political dynamics brought the Cold War era to an end followed by the implosion of the Eastern bloc, whatever existing higher education relationships with Africa simply ended. It took more than two decades before any semblance of partnership with these countries could be established. It was spearheaded by Russia – the core power in the bloc.

The exception to the rule, in some aspects, however, was Cuba whose support continued despite the fall of communism. In its ongoing scholarships assistance programme, for instance, 'close to 1,400 South African students [were recently] studying medicine at Cuban universities, and 323 of the graduates from the Cuban programmes worked as medical doctors in various South African hospitals'. In 2012, the South Africa-Cuba Extended Cooperation Agreement in the fields of health and medical sciences was signed to increase the number of South African medical students studying in Cuba and this occurred in 2010 when South Africa announced the cancellation of Cuba's more than Rand 1 billion (USD 100 million) debt (Open Society 2013).

To be sure, the number of students who studied in the eastern satellite states, such as Bulgaria, former Czechoslovakia, and Poland were in thousands. While much of the effort by the East had largely been focused on attracting students – and, in the process, training and indoctrinating them – it lacked the deep engagements of the West in establishing, running and funding higher education in the continent.

Despite its massive support in training a large number of the African intelligentsia and also fully paying for it, the Eastern bloc did not successfully impact the African higher education culture in any meaningful way. It should be noted, however, that many veterans of the independence struggles predominantly supported by the East, still preside over governments with considerable political power – but their clout in higher education is limited.

The Emerging Players

Emerging economic and political power houses, such as Brazil, China, India and South Korea, are increasingly engaging in a host of university development support as well as capacity building efforts in Africa.

China

Much has been written about China and its interest in Africa. But most of the discussion revolves around material extraction, construction, business, finance, and diplomacy. Serious engagements in higher education have been flying under the radar. Perhaps the most influential and certainly least examined initiative is the Chinese government's mammoth scholarship programme, which has grown exponentially over the last decade (Allison 2013). Currently, there are an estimated 12,000 Chinese-government supported and 18,000 self-supporting African students in the country. This is an astonishingly high figure, dwarfing scholarship programs offered to African students by any other country. Furthermore, the central government is not the only driver of the scholarship program; local governments and companies are increasingly expanding their ties with Africa through scholarships.

One increasingly prominent strategy of extending 'soft' Chinese power is the expansion of the Confucius Institutes. As of September 2013, an estimated 435 Confucius Institutes and 644 Confucius Classrooms operate around the world (Confucius Institute 2013). In Africa, there are now around 30 such institutes located in the University of Cairo in the North, University of Ghana in the West, the University of Yaounde II in the Centre, the University of Dar es Salaam in the East and the Rhodes University in the South. Confucius Institutes operate in cooperation with local affiliate colleges and universities around the world and aim to establish 1,000 such Institutes by 2020 (Xinhua 2006.).

Confucius Institutes are sometimes compared to language and culture promotion organisations such as Britain's British Council, France's Alliance Française and Germany's Goethe-Institut. Unlike these organisations, however, Confucius Institutes, which some critics call 'a propaganda arm wrapped in culture and language education' (Bernstein 2014) do not claim to be independent from their government (Confucius Institute 2013).

In particular, the third Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) summit contained Beijing's pledge to build educational infrastructure projects in Africa such as the Ethio-China Polytechnic in Addis Ababa and the University of Science and Technology in Malawi. The fourth and fifth FOCAC plans of action, issued in 2009 and 2012, respectively, pledges to provide 100 African postdoctoral fellowships in realisation of China-Africa Technology Partnership Programme, the China-Africa Research and Exchange Programme, and

the China-Africa Think Tank Forum (Obamba 2013). China has also provided support to the Pan-African University.

In the face of massive scholarship schemes supported by the federal and local governments, fast-expanding Confucius Institutes, and the prevailing instruments of the FOCAC, the long-term significance of these efforts – on cultural, educational, economic and political relationship between China and Africa – are not that hard to imagine.

India

The Second Africa-India Forum Summit in 2011, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, under the banner of 'Enhancing Partnership: Shared Vision' laid the foundations for a stronger partnership with the adoption of two key documents: the Addis Ababa Declaration and the Africa-India Framework for Enhanced Cooperation. The Framework and its Plan of Action adopted in 2010 were to give additional substance to the partnership with specific agreements to cooperate in a host of areas: from science and technology to research and development, from infrastructure to capacity building, and from culture and media to energy and environment (AAU, 2011).

It was at this summit that Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister of India, announced a mammoth US$ 5 billion credit to Africa for various development projects, reflecting India's growing ties with the resource-rich continent. Singh also declared an additional US$ 700 million package to establish new institutions and training programmes across the continent, dwarfing any of the 'historical' players. Singh announced plans to establish an India-Africa Virtual University for African students to study in Indian institutions. He further proposed 10,000 new scholarships under this proposed University for African students on its establishment. It was at this summit that he expressed support to Life and Earth Sciences hub of the Pan-African University (PAU) spearheaded by the African Union Commission (India Post 2011) though reports indicate that India's contributions as the so-called 'Lead Thematic Partner' has so far been absent. Just recently, India-Africa Partnership in Agriculture (IAPA) – consisting of Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and International Agriculture Consulting Group (ICAG) – was launched in 2013 (Shrivastava 2013).

South Korea

The development cooperation of South Korea with Africa has been largely overshadowed by the dominance of China and India in Africa. But, of recent, it has increasingly become more visible. According to Kim (2013), South Korea has three key motives for establishing development cooperation with

Africa. First is economic interest, namely, the desire to diversify and secure raw materials and resource supplies and expand its export markets. Second, it seeks political influence in Africa through diplomacy. The third motivation combines the first two motivations and relates to the more recent issue of the role of emerging actors in development cooperation. Korea promotes its global standing and exerts its 'soft power' as a bridge between developing and developed countries through the provision of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and as an OECD-DAC (Development Assistance Committee) member. In 2011, Korea International Cooperation Agency's (KOICA) grants to Africa totalled US$65.6 million, or 16.1 per cent of Korea's total ODA. In terms of sector expenditure, KOICA spent the largest share of its grants on education, followed by public administration, fishery and forestry, agriculture and health.

In February 2012, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) held its 2012 Triennale in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, with a dedicated Korea-Africa Day that discussed extensively the future cooperation prospects between South Korea and Africa in education, training and research (ADEA 2012). The event helped to showcase the economic progress of the country and prospected the partnership potential of South Korea in the development of Africa – which historically had comparable economic status some 50 years ago. A large Korean delegation attended this meeting, which attracted several heads of state and other dignitaries. As a manifestation of the continued relationship, South Korea, in collaboration with other organisations, such as ADEA and AfDB, grants awards to African entities in education.

Brazil

In 2013, Brazil launched a major higher education cooperation initiative with Portuguese-speaking Africa called, Africa-Brazil Higher Education Programme. Under the initiative, educators and researchers from 20 Brazilian centres of higher education provide services in five Portuguese-speaking African countries of Angola, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique and São Tomé and Principe. The University of São Paulo is intended to offer a Master's degree in education for Angolans, while the federal centre of higher studies in Rio Grande do Sul participate in implementing the first course in agronomy at the University of Cape Verde.

The collaborative plan also includes awarding scholarships to African students from Portuguese-speaking nations to study in Brazilian higher institutions, according to a report titled *Brazil in Africa: Ambitions and Achievements of an Emerging Regional Power in the Political and Economic Sector*. The report also indicated that Brazil recently inaugurated a university in Africa, the International Afro-Brazilian Lusophone University – *Universidade Federal*

da Integração Luso-Afro-Brasileira, or UNILAB, which was expected to admit half of 5,000 students from Africa by 2014 (Sawahel 2013).

Brazil is not simply working with African countries within the sphere of the language divide. It is already in agreement with South Africa in a high-level human resource development, competitive research linkages and the internationalisation of the research platform. The agreement follows within the context of strong binational engagements between South Africa and Brazil (NRF 2013).

In effect, the extent of commitment and magnitude of engagement of the new and emerging development cooperation players are considerable – even unparalleled in some cases. The role, implications and significance of these players are yet to fully unravel in the higher education sector largely because of the language divide and also the general perceptions of these countries in terms of their status and hierarchy in the knowledge domain.

Turkey

Turkey is slowly in moving as a player in African higher education specifically in the Arab and Muslim countries. A cooperation plan was agreed at the First Turkish-Arab Congress on Higher Education held in Istanbul in mid-2014 which includes setting up an Arab Turkish universities network, mutual recognition of degrees and enhanced student and staff mobility. The plan also focuses on sharing information about trends and ways to strengthen higher education, and building cooperation between universities in Turkey and the Arab world's 22 states, which include eight countries in Africa, six in the Arabian Gulf and eight in Asia (Sawahel 2014).

Discussion

The Motives, the Regimes and the Players

The motives behind external support for higher education in Africa – either in the guise of aid, development cooperation or economic socialist assistance – are numerous, though they tend to be generally similar. When the colonialists saw the need for higher education in Africa, they established a number of institutions which they cast against theirs in the metropole. While they had their deep and strategic interests in molding the education system, it should be stated that any divergence from what was an established practice was not an alternative choice even by colonial entities themselves (Ajayi et al. 1996). To be sure, however, the central intention of the colonialists was not only to cultivate the present but also make sure that the future institutions and their intelligentsia would continue to operate within the general sphere and influence of the colonists.

Following independence, virtually all the colonial subjects remained within that very social, economic, cultural, language and educational spheres of the former colonial powers. To ensure that continuity, the former colonial powers continued their support using a host of 'soft power' avenues, including higher education.

At the climax of the Cold War, the fight for the 'hearts and minds' of the new African intelligentsia had escalated. The strategy used to achieve that goal both by the West and East had been somewhat different. The Eastern bloc, headed by the former Soviet Union, enrolled a large number of African students in their respective countries' universities with 'compromised' selection criteria of students and poor backup plan on the return of graduates back home, thereby shaping the worldview of the new generation of the intelligentsia.

The Western bloc, on its part, used three approaches to achieve the same objective. These included: (i) Providing direct scholarships as the East did, but on a highly competitive basis; (ii) Capitalising on considerable diversity of programmes and institutions in the bloc riding on dominant international languages and existing relationship; and (iii) Engaging and even dominating the research and development efforts of the universities and think tanks of target countries through the provision of grants.

Following the end of the Cold War, the East abruptly withdrew from the geopolitical and cultural scenes. With the East effectively out of the picture, the other dominant forces started creeping aggressively into each other's areas of influence while seeking new ones. For instance, France, which had a dominant influence in West Africa for many years, began to lose some ground in the region. By 1998, the United Kingdom entered West Africa, dedicating nearly half of its education aid there (Ilon 2003: 69). Some US-based institutions have also found accommodation in these countries, to the displeasure of the French.

Ilon (2003) has identified five phases of development cooperation engagements on higher education in Africa. Among these are: human capital, structural adjustment, management and governance, poverty and markets, and the knowledge economy. In the current phase of the knowledge economy, the development cooperation dynamics in African higher education landscape has changed considerably, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

It is in this era that the adverse economic challenges coupled with global hostility have engulfed the world for nearly a decade now. These developments have had considerable impact on the dynamics of development cooperation. For instance, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, the main boardroom players of development cooperation, have been hammered so hard that they had to cut their funding support to this sector considerably.

According to a 2013 survey carried out on a donors group involved in higher education funding in Africa (leading up to this study), most respondents stated that their development cooperation funds had declined. In the case of Netherlands, for instance, while its funds declined by more than 30 per cent generally, its commitment to Africa declined by between 15 and 30 per cent. Only in two countries has there been an increase by more than 15 per cent. Similarly, only a German organisation reported considerable growth: €69, 75, and 90 million for higher education development partnership in 2010, 2011, and 2012 respectively.

It thus seems, then, that the high point of development cooperation between Africa and the Northern hemisphere has come and gone. This could be attributed to a number of factors, including the following: (i) The economic decline of the North/West; (ii) The emergence of new players in the game; and also (iii) The sustained economic growth in Africa. The implications of these developments on higher education are many. Among them are: (i) A large number of scholarship opportunities were made available to African students in China and India; (ii) Postgraduate and research opportunities (nationally and regionally) were expanded; (iii) Higher education in the region was expanded remarkably; and (iv) A number of African countries were unable to pay the sticker price for overseas studies (Nigeria and Botswana were affected to a limited extent now).

In the past, only a few organisations like the World Bank played a central role in defining and shaping the development path of higher education in Africa – and with disastrous consequences. As Woodhall (2003) puts it, the conclusion of the 'seriously flawed' study in *Financing Education in Developing Countries,* which guided the World Bank policy for several decades, 'were widely quoted and had considerable influence, not only on the World Bank lending policies but also on investment and aid strategies of other international agencies and donors' (p. 45). It took several studies, public debates, policy documents and publications that include its own seminal work as *Constructing Knowledge Societies* (World Bank 2000, co-sponsored with UNESCO) to undo the heavy damage as well as recalibrate the mindset of political leaders who read from the old script.

The World Bank, though much diminished, still remains an important player in African higher education scene. In mid-2013, it established a centre of excellence initiative in West and Central Africa. As of recent, it has started similar centres of excellence initiative in Eastern Africa. This would be a parallel initiative to the one undertaken by the African Union Commission supported by several old and new development players, such as the European Union Commission, Germany, Japan and China.

The leverage of the World Bank on the development discourse, at least as regard higher education in Africa, seems to have diminished for a number of reasons. First, the playing field of development discourse, once dominated by the Bank – once dubbed as 'Knowledge Bank' by President Wolfensohn and now 'Solutions Bank' by Jim Yong Kim – is now claimed by many. The Bank no longer has a monopoly on higher education discourses as in the past. Second, the Bank's credibility capital has diminished by the flawed study which is yet to be formally and explicitly acknowledged. To this day, many Vice-Chancellors recall the irresponsible statement of a bank staff at a meeting in 1986 who advised closing universities in the region and training graduates overseas (Brock-Utne 2000). Third, the increasingly assertive and powerful players in the new East – to make a distinction from Eastern bloc of the Cold War past – continue to displace the organisation considered by many as institution of the West. Fourth, the era of only a few flagship universities, where it was easier to dictate a discourse has gone with thousands of institutions – public and private – populating the African higher education landscape.

Critiques on policies, regimes, and outcomes of development cooperation abound. Development cooperation partners – as complex and diverse as they are – have, over the years, manifested different responses to these criticisms and concerns, some with considerable sensitivity, and others with minor and cosmetic adjustments, largely because the primary driver of the support they offer is not altruistic (Teferra 2009). The Paris Declaration (2005) and the Accra Accord for Action on Aid Effectiveness (2008) have become increasingly standard procedures of international development cooperation, directly and indirectly affecting the higher education landscape (OECD 2005, 2008). While the Paris and Accra Accords do not directly touch on higher education, the general framework of the accords governs issues which include ownership, sustainability, accountability, and orientation to result. But, much as Paris and Accra Accord speak to these outstanding and inherent problems, their significance – i.e., their implementation – has been so far limited (Penny and Teferra 2010).

Furthermore, many countries in the West are moving politically to the right with a propensity against development cooperation. Contrary to that, the new East is opening up a host of avenues of cooperation and partnership on the heels of a fast growing Africa – compounding the dynamics even more. It is simply a matter of time before the whole picture of development cooperation changes for good – with direct implications for higher education.

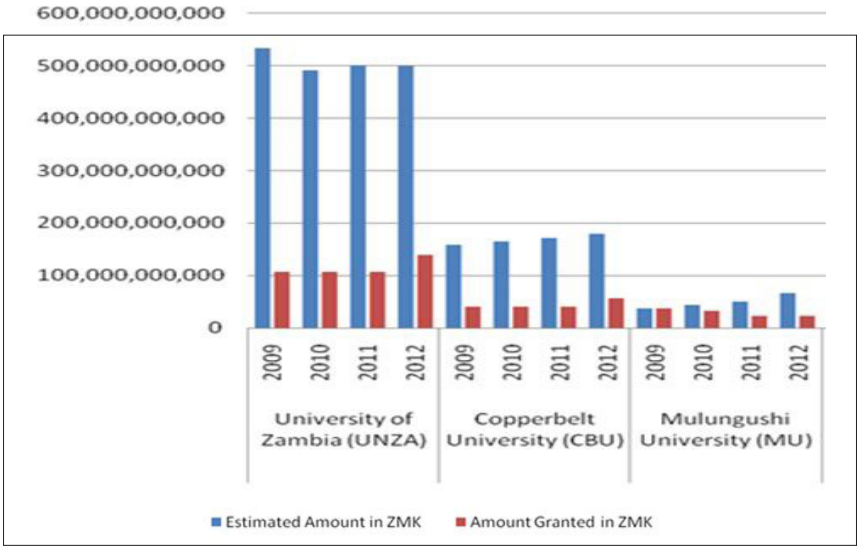
Dependency: Out of Vogue and Out of Sync

Higher education in Africa has witnessed phenomenal expansion both in the public and private spheres (Teferra 2013). This growth is not expected to

diminish in the foreseeable future due to the prevailing demography in the African continent – and the insatiable appetite for higher education. Accordingly, many governments have made huge capital outlays to fund expansion to meet the growing demand; and there are attendant overstretching of resources in many countries (Graphs 1 to 4).

Africa still depends largely on external sources to develop its capacity and excellence in research. Many institutions in Africa, including the so-called flagship ones, have virtually no resources for research. The case of Burkina Faso is most typical: more than 90 per cent of research undertaken by the University of Ouagadougou in 2003 was funded from external sources (Traore 2004).

Graph 1: Funding Patterns in Zambia Public Universities (Zambian Kwacha)*



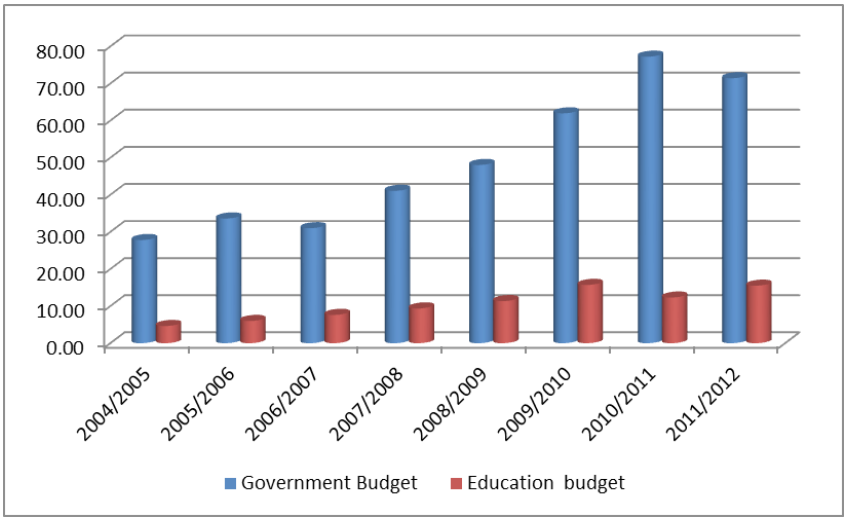
Source: Masaiti, 2013.

* 1 USD is equivalent to 6.5 Zambian Kwacha.

Many countries and institutions don't get much research outcomes for the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on higher education (Graph 2). Funding of research is pretty dismal at best, and non-existent at its worst in most cases. It is this critical gap that the development cooperation agencies come in to

fill. In Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia's flagship university with some 2,200 faculty and student population of 19,000, the research grant was miniscule compared to the total institutional budget. Of the total annual budget of US$ 74 million earmarked for AAU in 2010/11, only US$150,000 was allocated for research and development (Yigezu 2013) though this has been recently beefed up. With such a meagre provision, dependency on external sources for research funding remains inevitable.

Graph 2: National vs. Education Budget in Ethiopia (in billion, Birr)*

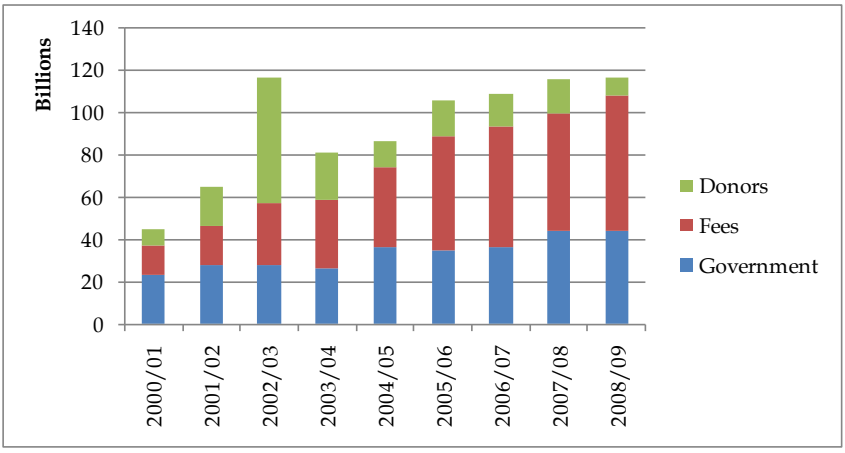


Source: Ministry of Education – Ethiopia, 2011 in Moges 2013

* 1 USD is equivalent to 20 Ethiopian Birr.

Samoff and Carrol (2003), hold that foreign aid to education in Africa is a small animal with a loud roar (Graph 3). For nearly all African countries, the major source of funds for education is the national treasury. With a few exceptions, foreign funding is a very small portion of total spending on education. And yet, new initiatives and reforms often require external support, compelling further dependence on the agenda and preferences of the funding agencies.

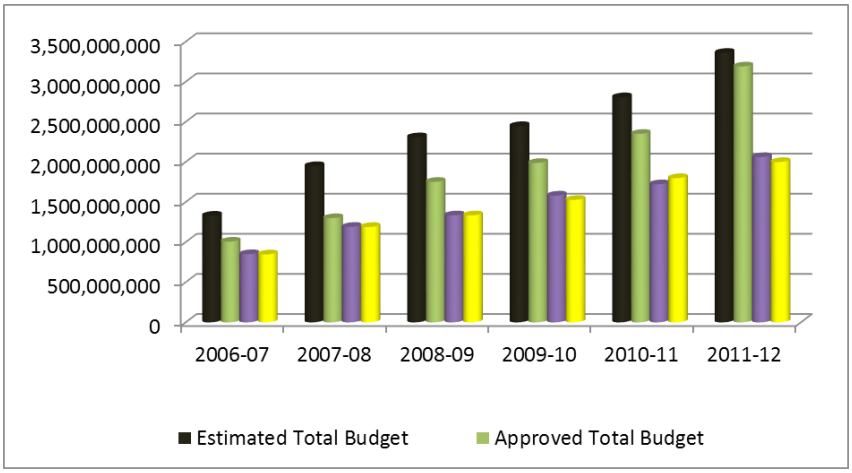
Graph 3: Makerere University Funding Sources, 2000-2009 (in billions, Ugandan Shillings)*



Source: Ssempebwa and Ssegawa 2013.

* 1 USD is equivalent to 2,670 Ugandan Shilling.

Graph 4: Funding Patterns in Malawi (Malawian Kwacha)*



Source: Dunga 2013.

* 1 USD is equivalent to 420 Malawian Kwacha.

In the world of the twenty-first century, where every nation strives to build universities and nurture their growth – as a survival strategy and pursuant of global competitiveness – Africa paradoxically, and dangerously, continues to depend on foreign funding for research and innovation – with direct current and future implications and consequences. It is only in a few countries, such as, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria, that some encouraging signs are observed.

One of the popular approaches to revitalising higher education in Africa, and particularly promote research, has been through what is now a buzz word in the sector – Partnerships: Regional Partnerships, South-South Partnerships, North-South Partnerships, North-South-South Partnerships, and North-North-South-South Partnerships. To be sure, partnerships are vital for capacity building in teaching, learning, and research. Joint research activities play an important role in fostering research capacity, nurturing research culture, pushing the frontiers of knowledge, as well as benchmarking quality. Meticulously developed long-term joint research partnerships have shown successful results. In Ethiopia, for instance, inter-university cooperation sustained through the support of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and VLIR-UOS (Belgium) have shown good results: a large pool of PhDs have been produced; numerous programmes have been developed; and sustainable capacities have been put in place. The same could be said of Tanzania through the Norwegian Agency for Development (NORAD) support which provided some NOK 750 million for over four decades (Teferra 2011). Many agree that such results would have simply been impossible without the financial, logistical, and human resources made possible through long-term joint commitment.

In numerous ways, the world today is different from what it was some two decades, or even a decade, ago. In economic terms, the global centres of economic superpowers are diversifying, if not shifting. While much of the rest of the world, most particularly the developed world, has been reeling from the economic catastrophe, Africa, once dubbed as the 'Hopeless Continent,' according to *The Economist* Magazine (2000), now has the largest number of countries with sustained high economic growth. The magazine was forced to revise its opinion a decade later by announcing 'The Hopeful Continent: Africa Rising – Africa's Future Illuminating (*The Economist,* 2011). In the light of all these developments, Africa's continued dependence on external development actors for its higher education – specially research – is simply unwarranted.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Development cooperation has often been the subject of passionate political and academic debate of numerous schools of thoughts. As earlier discussed, it was in the light of this long and often acrimonious debate that the Paris and the Accra Accords were adopted. Though these declarations did not have in mind university partnerships in particular, the basic tenets governing them such as predictability, mutual accountability, ownership, alignment, and harmonisation are all relevant and applicable.

The development cooperation landscape is changing with the entrance of new, more assertive and more informed players and stakeholders. Even at its altruistic best, it is in the nature of external funding to be unsustainable, unstable, and foreign. The Paris Declaration and the Accra Accord for Action on aid effectiveness were declared with the hope of purging development cooperation of these undesirable traits.

When capacity building in the context of university cooperation is often invoked, the perceptions are that the Southern partners are the predominant, if not the sole, beneficiaries of cooperation. Indeed, this perception is often internalised by the Southern partners themselves. Though the extent of the benefits to the Northern/Western partners have not been explicitly documented, their gain is rather obvious. Even without regard to the immediate and visible benefits of partnerships, the very exercise of engaging in global issues, without doubt, generates institutional and national knowledge capital for the North/West. In the current global realities, where the global is local and the local is global, the mutual benefits from such cooperation should not be underestimated or overlooked.

As the number of institutional partnerships continues to grow, their impact on institutional resources – time, funding, and infrastructure – and institutional dynamics – cohesion, complementarity, and priorities – may be considerable. This may be particularly so in countries with a few institutions that can be partnered with in the region and which tend to attract more development support.

Whereas the modality and scope of partnerships, particularly higher education partnerships, are diverse, complex, and numerous, they however, are not always successful, nor are they effective. In many cases partnerships do not simply live up to expectation for a number of reasons. These range from paltry financial resources to weak logistical support, from poor planning to substandard execution, from bad policy to cumbersome guidelines, and from unstable leadership to inconsistent follow up (Teferra 2011).

To be sure, only a few 'altruistic entities' operate in the development cooperation game on the account of true global citizenship. This makes it even more compelling to ensure that Africa depends on its own resources while

expanding and consolidating the partnership schemes on its own terms. The huge investment that Africa has made in higher education needs to be systematically consolidated by strategically investing in its knowledge citadels – to create, innovate and develop knowledge – so as to base its current economic success on solid ground.

Furthermore, it is imperative that the marketplace of partnerships discourse in the region is guided by well informed, responsible and pragmatic stakeholders in Africa and elsewhere. At the end, it is in the best interest of all the stakeholders, both in the North and the South, to have a sustained impact and meaningful outcome in the (re-)engagement with Africa. However, Africa has a lot more stake in it to leave it to the whims and goodwill of external partners most of whom, with or without official declaration, are not in it for purely altruistic reasons.

African higher education has been dependent on foreign sources since its inception – and that practice continues unabated despite changing geopolitical and economic realities. With the expansion of higher education and the overstretched resources of national governments, reliance on foreign sources may not unfortunately change considerably anytime soon as more students are enrolled in the countries, while the education pie is growing smaller. The wisdom, however, remains in making strategic decisions that identify the few institutions and building their capacity effectively through own and external sources.

Finally, as the aftermath of the global economic crisis on development funding has proved, Africa must depend on its own resources and its own policies to build its critical pillar of sustainable development. This is particularly imperative at a time when the region has recorded sustained economic growth while its historical development partners have suffered economic turmoil (Teferra 2013). According to *The Economist* (2011), six of the world's ten fastest-growing countries over the past decade were African. Also, in eight out of the past ten years, Africa has grown faster than East Asia, including Japan. Even allowing for the knock-on effect of the northern hemisphere's slowdown, the IMF expected Africa to grow by 6 per cent – about the same as Asia. Thus the continent must strategically convert this sustained economic success towards consolidating its knowledge institutions – the universities – by minimising its dependence on any particular development cooperation player – North or South, East or West, new or old – to ensure a more 'equitable' partnership as espoused in the Paris Declaration and Accra Accord.

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Universities and Regional Development: Lessons from the OECD Regional Assessment of the Free State, South Africa

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Abstract

For the past few decades, the debate surrounding the 'third mission' of universities in South Africa has been dominated by the notion of university-community engagement. At the same time, the notion of regional development has come under the spotlight internationally. Drawing on existing literature on the relationship between universities, knowledge, the economy and community engagement, this paper scrutinises the OECD review of university-regional engagement in the Free State province in order to identify key lessons. Our contention is that, because the notion of regional engagement has become a central part of university management, assessment and even rankings, it should be viewed as an integral part of a university's core activities of teaching and research, rather than as a separate third mission. Furthermore, findings reveal that a university's engagement with its region also depends on regional assets and structures to support such processes.

Key words: Higher education; universities; regional engagement; knowledge economy; OECD review; Free State; South Africa.

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Résumé

Au cours des quelques dernières décennies, le débat autour de la « troisième mission » des universités en Afrique du Sud a été dominé par la notion de l'engagement université-communauté. En même temps, la notion de développement régional est venue internationalement au devant de la scène. Tirant partie de la littérature existante sur la relation entre les universités, le savoir, l'économie et l'engagement communautaire, cet article passe à la loupe la revue université-engagement régional de l'OCDE dans la province de Free State pour identifier des leçons clés. Notre assertion est que, parce que la notion d'engagement régional est devenu une partie essentielle de la gestion, de l'évaluation et même de classement des universités, il devrait être vu en tant que partie intégrale des activités centrales d'enseignement et de recherche, plutôt que comme une troisième mission séparée. En outre, les constatations révèlent que l'engagement d'une université avec sa région dépend aussi des actifs et structures régionaux pour appuyer des tels processus.

Mots clés : enseignement supérieur ; universités ; engagement régional ; économie de la connaissance ; revue de l'OCDE ; Free State ; Afrique du Sud.

Introduction

The third-mission role of universities has been the subject of much debate and scholarly research over the past few decades. Common themes discussed over the years include volunteerism, service learning, university outreach, experiential learning, consultancy, knowledge and technology transfer, innovation, and university-community engagement (Molas-Gallart and Castro-Martinex 2007). More recently, these debates have been broadened by a focus on the critical role of knowledge in regional development and the role of universities and other institutions as knowledge generators and agents in the development process (Dubina et al. 2011; European Commission, 2013). The literature gives attention to the importance of knowledge and innovation in sustained national and regional transformation and development (Altbach 2008; Bellini et al. 2012).

Furthermore, a variety of third mission concepts, theories and branches of study have emerged, to enhance the understanding of the relationship between universities and the social and economic improvement of their local and extended regions. These include notions such as the triple-helix concept (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1998), university engagement (Chatterton and Goddard 2000; OECD 2001; 2007a), constructive advantage (Cooke and

Leydesdorff 2006), knowledge transfer (Siegel & Phan, 2005; Siegel et al., 2003), innovative milieus (Aydalot 1986; Ratti et al. 1997), national and regional systems of innovation (Freeman 1995; Lundvall 1992; Amin and Thrift 1994) and the learning-region concept (Florida 1995; Hassink 2005). At the same time, regional engagement has also become an integral part of some university ranking systems (van Vught et al. 2010). The OECD has played a major role in advocating a third mission role of universities, emphasising the importance of universities in promoting regional and local development. The OECD has embarked on a number of assessments to analyse this using output variables such as research publications, human capital development and strategic appraisal of how universities in the cities or semi-urban regions contribute to regional development.

This paper uses findings from one such review of a South African university to draw key lessons for the role of universities in regional development. Based on the review findings, this paper teases out key findings and potential lessons for university engagement in regional development through human capital and skills development, knowledge and technology transfer, business innovation, social and cultural development and regional engagement strategies aimed at adequate capacity development. The paper has four main sections. The next section provides a concise theoretical framework of the role of universities in regional development. The third section presents a quick overview of the discourse within the South African context. Section 4 focuses on the OECD assessment process within the Free State Province of South Africa. Besides offering an overview of the province, the OECD review process and the main findings, it further generates potential lessons for development in the university-regional interface. Section 5 reflects on the potential implications of the lessons.

Universities in Regional Development

The university of today, irrespective of its history, size and orientation (entrepreneurial or traditional; technical or research-oriented), faces the challenge of being relevant to both its immediate and its extended society, while not neglecting its two core functions of research and teaching (Castells 2001; Cloete *et al*. 2011). To an increasing degree, the present-day university is thus moving from an ideological position to one that is more instrumental or utilitarian, and from a focus on knowledge creation to a growing interest in knowledge application and meeting day-to-day needs (Martin and Etzkowtiz 2000). The drive to be relevant to external stakeholders has resulted in new theoretical and practical implications for the work being done by the university. Under the broad umbrella of the 'third mission', new forms of engagement (such as

philanthropic endeavours, social responsiveness, community engagement and entrepreneurship) have emerged across the globe – this depending on the type of university or its mission, the local context and the availability of resources (Dempsey 2010). More recently, the notion of regional engagement has emphasised the importance of knowledge creation to benefit the regions in which universities are located or of providing the human capital for specific regions. Thus, the emphasis is on using the two existing core functions of the university to benefit specific regions, rather than having a separate third mission.

Up to the 16th and 17th century, early universities tried to shield themselves from enlightenment ideas. Though participating in some form of societal activities like training of priest and training teachers, the immaculate university species ideology dominated the purpose of the university (Martin and Etzkowitz, 2000). Perkins (2006:173), commenting on the university of the time, holds that 'their role was limited to training priests and a few civil servants'. However, with more demands being placed on HEIs, Napoleon abolished the *ancien régime* of the French universities and instituted the *grandes écoles*, which had a more professional orientation (Altbach 2008:8). Wilhelm von Homboldt later followed up on this when he established the initial form of the modern university in Germany in 1810, one that was not only committed to bringing research to the centre of academic work, but also to linking knowledge to applied science and national development.

In America, the 19th century witnessed the emergence of a new form of university that engaged with societal needs. This was set in motion by the passing of the Morill Act of 1862, and the establishment in 1890 of land grant universities/colleges of agriculture (McDowell 2003). This policy was supported by funding allocations from the state government through the allocation of state land and other support. The American concept of engagement, according to Graubard (1997 in McDowell 2003), ushered in a unique approach, not only because of the innovative idea it introduced, but more so because of the 'service' concept that gave a novel meaning to state universities aimed at assisting society in ways hitherto unknown (McDowell 2003:33). Land-grant universities, which have been established worldwide since the latter part of the 19th century, have been widely acclaimed as a revolutionary form of engagement that demonstrates the potential of universities to enhance social and economic development (Thelin 2004).

More recent examples of the role of universities in the development of their external regions or communities have been observed with notions of the entrepreneurial university (Clark 1998) and the establishment of regional universities, especially with Nordic nations like Norway playing a catalytic role in breaking regional lock-ins (Benneworth et al. 2006:19; Benneworth

and Hospers 2008; Coenen 2007; OECD 2008). Empirical studies in both developed and developing nations indicate the role of universities in national, regional and local development through different forms of engagement with stakeholders and communities at local, regional and even national levels. (Bridges 2007; OECD 2007b; Wangenge-Ouma and Fongwa 2012). In the new economy, the knowledge economy, the role of universities has even been amplified.

The OECD which has emerged as a major player in promoting the role of universities in development has advocated a more regional dimension of universities in enhancing its relevance to social and economic transformation. While concepts such as third mission and community engagement could cover a broad spectrum of activities (See Kruss et al. 2012) in terms of context and approach, the OECD advocates a more regional emphasis where knowledge and partnership with local stakeholders form a core of the mission and vision of the university and its core functions. According to it:

> To be able to play their regional role, HEIs must do more than simply educate and research – they must engage with others in their regions, provide opportunities for lifelong learning and contribute to the development of knowledge-intensive jobs which will enable graduates to find local employment and remain in their communities. This has implications for all aspects of these institutions' activities – teaching, research and service to the community and for the policy and regulatory framework in which they operate (OECD 2007a:11).

Cloete et al. (2011:21) make a similar observation and use empirical data from eight African countries as they argue for better alignment between the core functions of higher education systems and the national development plans of the respective countries. Despite an increasing awareness of the role of knowledge in national and regional development, none of the countries (except Mauritius) seems to align knowledge and academic endeavour with the development trajectory of a country. Although South Africa assigns importance to research related to development at the national level, Cloete and colleagues detect a lack of coordinated effort to link university missions and functions with national and regional development objectives (Cloete et al. 2011:127). This results in a concomitant lack of an institutionalised notion of the role of the university in development.

Using the OECD approach to assessing the link between the university (policy and practice) to development priorities, this paper focuses on the role of a case study university in the regional development of South Africa. This

aims to situate the work of the university in the development of a defined geographical context around which the university is situated. Based on this approach, a potential challenge relates to the conceptualisation and delineation of the concept of region. Chatterton and Goddard (2000:478) observe that 'regions are emerging and are being defined …' while Cooke and Leydesdorff (2006:6) have a more practical take on the concept, arguing that the administrative boundary becomes of primary importance. However, for this paper we apply the OECD's (2001:24) conceptualisation of a region as 'a territory or level of authority in between the local and the national level'. Hence this paper focuses on the role of the UFS in the development of the Free State province within the South African context. The next section provides an overview of university community engagement literature with a focus on regional development aspects.

University Engagement and Regional / Local Development in South Africa

Third-mission discourse in South Africa seems to be the subject of continual debate with increasing arguments for the lack of clear policy guidelines and conceptual clarity (Council on Higher Education 2010). While the higher education system has a very successful set of performance indicators such as student throughput, research outputs and even research commercialisation and patenting, very little coordination has been attempted in terms of linking some of these outputs with the university's contribution to local, regional or national development. Moreover, the role of universities in development has only recently been highlighted in South African academic literature (Muller 2010) and it features mostly within the context of higher education studies, rather than within the context of regional or local economic development studies. The Council on Higher Education's review of community engagement in the South African higher education environment summarises the situation in the following words:

> Universities are involved in many activities structured around research, teaching and outreach that entail engagement with a wide range of communities, but these activities are uncoordinated and are the result of individual, rather than of strategically planned, systematic endeavours (Council on Higher Education 2010:iii).

The above observation seems valid, despite the fact that in the early years of the new political dispensation, the 1997 White Paper on Higher Education set the stage for a more responsive and engaging university system (Lazarus

et al. 2008). Two of the three pillars of the White Paper are responsiveness and partnerships with stakeholders. However, these principles have not been enshrined in a clear community engagement policy or in a framework for higher education institutions[1] (Hall 2010).

Muller (2010) suggests that the meaning of the term 'community engagement' has changed considerably over the past four decades, depending on the context. He identifies four phases of university-community engagement in South Africa: engagement with the struggle (1980s), engagement in service to the community (mid-1990s), engagement with Mode Two Knowledge and society relations (early 2000s), and engagement with development (mid-2000s). The first phase is summarised in the following words:

> At its best it attempted to connect an intellectual project to a socio-political project, and it attempted to bridge these by helping to bring powerful knowledge to bear on political policy and strategy (Muller 2010:73).

The second phase was largely influenced by land-grant ideals and American volunteerism, and service learning became a core activity during this time period (Muller 2010). Bunting and Cloete (2007) add that community engagement, as incorporated in the 1997 White Paper, was seen as a form of redress. The third phase emphasised applied knowledge (Mode Two Knowledge) that was relevant to industry, but the notions of locality and community were lost to a large degree. Arguably, while the Mode Two discourse takes cognisance of the role of networks and communities of practice, its conceptualisation does not include adequate reference to a physical regional or local context in the application of knowledge. Mode Two Knowledge application assumed its implementation across geographic boundaries. Thus, in accordance with this line of thinking, while universities began to think and learn from business in their core business of knowledge production, the regional context and/or role of universities remained abstract, and frequently out of touch with the immediate physical surroundings.

The fourth phase – 'engagement with development' – attempts to bring university research and teaching into line with regional development needs (Muller 2010), although critics have warned against the simplistic use of phrases such as 'problem-orientated research' and 'relevance' when this notion of universities and development is being discussed. Cooper (2009) argues that national innovation systems (which he views as broader than the 'triple-helix model') require highly effective research-based and research-led universities. The OECD echoes this argument by its conceptualisation of regional engagement

as 'a strategy developed by the university in collaboration with the regional and local stakeholders'. Thus, both Cooper (2009) and the OECD advocate true engagement, as opposed to *ad hoc*, opportunistic and geographically circumscribed engagement with a minimal or no focus on developing synergies (see Puukka et al. 2012:189). While the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), in its 2013 White Paper, has recognised community engagement in its diverse forms, little effort has been made in terms of conscious strategies to integrate and clearly delineate the third mission as a core business of universities (RSA 2013) in national and regional development. This lack of conceptual clarity and measurement in respect of the third mission of a university remains a grey area, leaving the way open for diverse forms of interpretation of the relationship between universities and their regions. From findings at a South African university, Cloete et al. (2011:129) observe that 'at neither national nor institutional level was there agreement about the role of the university in development' and that there was surprisingly little support among university leadership for a knowledge-economy approach to national and regional development.

The Free State Province in Context

Among the nine provinces that constitute the Republic of South Africa, the Free State Province (FS) is centrally situated, sharing boundaries with six other provinces and also with the Kingdom of Lesotho, and is landlocked. The province ispopulated by about 2.9 million people. In comparison with the other provinces, the FS had the highest levels of unemployment (Stats SA 2012) between the third quarter of 2011 and the end of 2012, partly owing to the major decline in the mining and agricultural sectors (Marais 2013). The Free State Growth and Development Strategy (Free State Provincial Government 2012) observes that the decline of the primary sector coincides with high levels of unemployment in the unskilled and poorly-skilled population groupings (mainly in agriculture and mining). Despite this decline, the province continues to boast a strong, though dwindling agricultural capacity, as a result of which it came to be commonly known as South Africa's 'bread basket'. With the poorly-skilled experiencing more difficulty in finding jobs in other sectors, Marais and Pelser (2006) estimate that approximately 230, 000 people left commercial farms in the Free State between 1991 and 2001. The mining sector also shed more than 150, 000 jobs between 1990 and 2011.

As far as education is concerned, the province continues to struggle with low levels of education attainment and success. Of the total population aged fifteen years and above, more than 69 per cent have a qualification lower than a Matric.[2] Only 23 per cent have Grade 12 certificates (Matric), while a

meagre 8 per cent have a tertiary qualification of any kind. The South African 2011 Census Report indicates that these trends have persisted. The Free State Province continues to display low educational levels, in that more than 20 per cent of those aged fifteen and above have a qualification lower than Grade 7 (Stats SA 2012).

Furthermore, the province suffers from significantly low levels of advanced research, with no major research institutions other than the two universities: University of the Free State and the Central University of Technology. The low industrial base (Nel et al. 2006) and high levels of dependence on primary-sector employment also contribute to a high rate of 'brain drain'. The main campuses of both universities are situated in the Mangaung municipality, less than 10 kilometres away from each other. The low matric attainment, coupled with the fact that South African students prefer to study in the larger metropolitan cities, has limited the HE enrolment at the two provincial universities. Table 1, which compares different provinces in terms of higher education indicators suggest that the province is not among the high performers in terms of knowledge base and knowledge production. Owing to the low industrial base of the province, graduates most often have to move to the more industrially endowed provinces in search of greener pastures. This further weakens the knowledge base of the province.

The above trend is observed in a Human Sciences Research Council report that says, 'a characteristic of the South African higher education sector is the concentration of resources and doctoral students in a small number of universities' (SAaccess 2010:33). At the time of the report, five of the 23 public universities (Cape Town, Witwatersrand, KwaZulu-Natal, Pretoria and Stellenbosch) between them accounted for more than 65 per cent of the total university research and development expenditure and for more than 50 per cent of researchers and 56 per cent of the total number of doctoral students. Because its universities do not rank among the said five top universities, the Free State Province has a relatively weak innovation and knowledge base along with a weak industrial base.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of South Africa's Knowledge Economy by Selected Provinces (2007)

	HE enrolments (headcount)	Graduates (headcount)	Permanent staff (academic / research	% of total South African university research and development **funding****	Regional contribution to national GDP (%)
Eastern Cape	67 881	12 476	1 814	6.45	7.7
Free State	39 446	7 749	1 026	4.67	5.5
Gauteng*	186 971	39 236	4 267	33.55	33.7
KwaZulu-Natal	85 861	17 075	2 392	14.48	15.8
Western Cape	96 641	23 707	3 077	29.42	14.1

Source: DoE, 2010; HSRC, 2008; Statistics South Africa, 2011; ***.** Data exclude students from the University of South Africa in that most of them are not based in Gauteng Province.

The OECD Review of the Free State: OECD Review Process, Key Findings and Lessons Learnt

The OECD review falls within the broader framework of assessing the regional development role of higher education institutions. The review guidelines are framed along a number of indicators of the higher education system at the national and the regional levels. Through policy and practice, the emphasis is on assessing how higher education at the national and the institutional levels is linked to the development of the city and of the region. Like all such OECD reviews, the Free State Province Review is structured along core guidelines that concentrate on three main aspects. The first part provides a contextual review of the Free State Province within the geographical, socio-economic and political landscape of the country, which aims to provide a better understanding of the city or region in the context of the broader economy, geography and political or governance structures. The second aspect of the review focuses on the higher education system and on how higher education policies at the national and the institutional levels are linked to aspects of national and regional socio-economic development. Thirdly, the review assesses the institutional disposition towards contributing to regional development. This focuses on clear policies towards the region, the engagement culture of the institution and its platforms of engagement with regional stakeholders. The fourth level of assessment interrogates the knowledge interface between the university and the regional stakeholders for social, economic and environmental development through research and innovation, teaching and learning for regional skills development, and regional capacity development towards sustainable engagement. The review concludes with recommendations for better engagement between universities and the region.

The OECD itself initiated the review of the University of the Free State (South Africa) in regional and city development in 2009. Although more than fifty such reviews had been conducted globally, this was the first to be conducted in Africa. The first step of the process entailed the province's completion of a self-evaluation report (Free State Regional Steering Committee, 2010). The second step entailed a pre-review visit to ensure that the self-evaluation report was complete and that specific interviews had been set up. This was followed by a two-day visit to national government departments and research institutions in Pretoria. Next, a range of interviews was conducted with representatives from the two universities in the region, from provincial government, from local governments and from non-governmental organisations. Finally, a review report was released in December 2011.

Main Findings from the Review

Finding One: There is a skills mismatch between university training and the requirements of industry

The report clearly indicates a skills mismatch between the training provided and the needs of industry, at both regional and national level. The report highlights the lack of skills alignment with skills development in the Free State, which is arguably a national problem as well. The report states that:

> There is a mismatch between labour market demand and higher education and training supply that is undermining the Free State's growth and innovation potential, and has resulted in not only high unemployment but also skills shortages (Puukka et al. 2012:19).

Rather than concentrating on the labour needs of the regional market, the universities in the Free State focus largely on the national and international labour markets. In this respect, the OECD report argues that '... the education system needs to become better aligned with the needs of the region, its labour market and population' (Puukka et al. 2012:19). Furthermore, the lack of an adequate vision for graduate employment at the provincial level and the absence of student-tracking mechanisms which could inform curricula are noted in the report as two additional shortcomings.

More specifically, the report emphasises that the 'dire shortage [of] technicians and the low proportion of science and technology graduates from the universities' are critical shortcomings in terms of the required human capital in the region (Puukka et al. 2012:19) – a need that has also been identified by other role-players (Jones 2013:47). As pointed out by ECSA, the report further questions the ability of the existing public work programmes to provide the required skills for the region, given that a narrow focus on specific practical skills and short-term contracts is unlikely to have long-term benefits. Instead, the OECD report suggests placing a stronger emphasis on general competencies and lifelong learning. It also highlights the potential development role to be played by the further education and training sector, but points out, at the same time, that current lifelong learning programmes favour existing graduates and could benefit from opening their doors to non-graduates.

Finding Two: Regional collaboration is limited and needs to be improved

The second major finding is that there is a very weak level of collaboration between higher education and training institutions and the regional or local development partners. But more importantly, there is a lack of active dynamic

collaboration with small enterprises. As in the case of most South African universities, the Free State universities have actively pursued significant collaboration with large-scale industry across the national territory and beyond. However, this kind of collaboration has not translated into similar relationships with small firms. According to the report, this can be addressed by improving the regional innovation system. This lack of regional collaboration between knowledge-producing institutions and other stakeholders was also identified by the DST at an earlier stage. This resulted in the development of the regional systems of innovation. As a follow-up to this finding, however, the development of the recently established Regional Innovation Forum, an initiative supported nationally by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to support regional systems of innovation, is a step in the right direction.

Finding Three: Build knowledge partnerships as opposed to finding external funding

The third finding is that, in view of the industrial base of the province, and taking cognisance of the level of knowledge demand, the two universities will have to broaden their understanding and conceptualisation of knowledge transfer and innovation in order to accommodate a greater degree of social relevance. The two universities in the Free State province, like many universities in South Africa, are faced with the double challenge of a smaller R&D funding base, and the fact that they are surrounded by communities in dire poverty and need. These communities and regions do not have the same capacity to demand knowledge as that which is encountered in regions in more developed countries; hence, while the global literature advocates knowledge and technology transfer (Siegel and Phan 2005; Urbano and Guerrero 2013), these universities need to reconceptualise knowledge transfer as entailing 'interventions with low revenue potential, but high potential to yield high societal returns in order to build support among other segments' (Puukka et al. 2012:32). This would include, among other aspects, focusing on low-tech sectors, as well as social and organisational innovation.

Finding Four: University-regional engagement requires an appropriate multi-level policy environment

The OECD review report reveals that an appropriate policy environment can be contextualised at three levels. At the first level, the important criterion is the regional accountability of universities (or the lack thereof). In South Africa, all public universities are funded nationally, which means that there is little or no accountability to the regional government. This is in stark contrast to the land-grant in the USA and at regional universities in Norway, which receive

a fair amount of regional funding and therefore have a responsibility in terms of regional priorities. The South African national funding model may help universities to be more independent, but at the same time it could potentially result in universities aligning themselves exclusively with national priorities (or with no priorities at all). Indeed, the OECD report confirms that universities in South Africa are more likely to associate themselves with national than with regional development needs, because of this funding model.

At the second level, it can be argued that there has not been sufficient theoretical discussion on the regional dimension of the current systems of innovation. Attention needs to be focused on the degree to which the national policy environment allows for regional innovation. In this regard, the OECD report suggests that

> Higher education and training policy in South Africa lacks regional dimensions. Regional engagement of universities could be fostered through quality assurance, funding allocation and processes for faculty appointment, promotion and tenure (Puukka et al. 2012:34).

Currently, South African higher education policies neither articulate a demand nor offer incentives for universities to participate in regional engagement. This is compounded by the fact that governments at the sub-national (provincial) and local levels remain reticent with regard to the initiation of such demands and incentive structures (Puukka et al. 2012:180). While numerous policies for research and innovation have been put in place (DACST 1996; DST 2007), albeit with a national-level focus, recent studies (Pinherio et al. 2012; Kaplan 2008) demonstrate that there is a relatively weak link between knowledge production, on the one hand, and innovation policies relating to development planning, on the other.

At the third level, the degree to which decentralised planning is permitted and taken seriously has an influence on the role of universities in regional development. In this respect, the OECD report notes that much more could be done to ensure appropriate regional planning:

> While South Africa has made progress in developing place-based policies, the regional development policies and regional economic agenda remain highly defined and implemented in a top-down fashion, leaving limited leeway for regional initiatives and capacity building (Puukka et al. 2012:34).

Two points should be made in this respect. First, despite the fact that South Africa has an array of local and regional planning frameworks, the question

is whether these decentralised frameworks are being managed appropriately in order to effectively promote successful regional and local development opportunities. Secondly, it is important that local and regional actors should realise the value of universities as knowledge creators in a changing global and local economy where knowledge is becoming a major factor in production processes. More specifically, the OECD report makes the key point that the absence of a joint long-term vision regarding the role of universities in the region's socio-economic development, coupled with the lack of an integrated development strategy for all educational institutions in the province, hampers the overall development of the Free State.

Possible Lessons for Universities in Regional Development

Based on the above findings, three key lessons in respect of enhancing regional development can be drawn from the relationship between the UFS and its regional stakeholders. These lessons are evident at three levels. The first level engages with the broader policy environment informing national development and the higher education system. The second level relates to establishing a balance between global relevance and regional engagement. The third dimension argues for the contextual profiling of a region's absorptive capacity and points to the need for a strong demand-supply approach.

Lesson One: Regional collaboration – the regional role of universities should be conceptualised within the broader development policy

The OECD report highlights the fact that higher education cannot be viewed in isolation from primary, secondary and further educational endeavours in the region. A regional approach that is inclusive of all the different educational and development needs and that emphasises collaboration between institutions is central to ensuring a well-functioning education system and promoting regional development. These notions of integration and collaboration are articulated in the OECD report in the following words:

> Challenges in the higher education and training sector and economic development are linked to the underperforming school system and a massive school failure. Long term collaborative efforts are needed to improve the quality and learning outcomes of the education system (Puukka et al. 2012:17).

The presence of partnerships between academics and their region not only enhances the quality of research, but also potentially informs the curriculum and increases the quality of graduates (Favish & McMillan 2009:175; Kruss

et al. 2012). As argued in terms of the learning region concept (Hassink 2005; OECD 2001), these partnerships could consist of formal and/or informal networks involving institutions, the regional government, industry and social actors. The OECD's analysis reveals that the level of collaboration in the Free State Province remains weak. Cooperation between the Central University of Technology and the University of the Free State in terms of technology transfers, commercialisation and entrepreneurship remains limited, reflecting the inability of top management to establish effective links (Puukka et al. 2012:157 – 158). The Commission of the European Communities postulates that:

> … it is not simply the presence of units of research and technological development infrastructure but the degree of interaction between them which is the most significant factor in local (regional) innovation. The quality of the linkage and the presence of local synergy is (*sic*) the key element. Therefore a system or network approach provides the best basis for understanding and promoting regional research and technological development-based innovation (Commission of the European Communities, 1988 in Morgan 1997:S152).

The report also underscores the importance of collaboration between the various educational institutions in the Free State and recommends that a portion of the national allocation to universities be based on collaborative efforts in the region. While weak collaboration between the two universities can be addressed at different levels of policy, one of the approaches followed has entailed the initiation of the regional innovation forum, with support provided by the DST. Referring to the participation of one of the regional universities, the coordinator of the forum comments as follows:

> When we started they were on the back foot with many questions [indicating suspicion on their part] and we had to draw close to them, meet with them in a neutral venue and answer most of their questions. And you can see, mistrust [was] broken down slowly and trust [was] being built. And then you realise communication is only 20% verbal and 80% non-verbal. Trust is not something that is written on paper. It will have to be built (RIF Coordinator 2013).

Whilst not explicit about the developmental role of universities, the National Development Plan provides a compelling case for positioning universities as key players in efforts to advance social justice in South Africa and address global challenges in partnership with other sectors of society, particularly the

most vulnerable sections of our society. The absence, therefore of a policy enabling environment from all sectors of the society, including higher education, science and technology, and economic development will limit the potential of higher education institutions in national and regional development

Lesson Two: Regionalisation is not the antithesis of internationalisation

University debates surrounding regionalism are often criticised for being inward-looking and anti-international. However, the OECD report suggests that instead of focusing on this false dichotomy between regionalisation and internationalisation, one should consider the positive relationship between the two. More specifically, the report recommends

> ... stronger efforts to internationalise the region, through talent attraction and development programmes supporting key areas of development of the Free State, integration of international students and faculty in the academic and social life of their universities and the region by training them to become 'ambassadors for the Free State (Puukka et al. 2012:25).

Thus, internationalisation might comprise a way to address the skills shortage and ensure global recognition for the region. It is also important to note that the OECD report considers improved research outputs and internationalisation to be two important prerequisites for regional engagement. This notion that an active research environment will lead, in most cases, to regional/local engagement is also mentioned by Muller (2010:85) who states that:

> The most active researchers are likely to be the ones that are engaged in the public domain in one or the other way. If academics are not engaged, it may well be that they are not research active either. In which case, university transformation should start here, not with intensified calls for engagement.

It thus remains important that higher education institutions do not to lose perspective at national level as a result of focusing on global relevance, but that they become more locally engaged while seeking more globally competitiveness (OECD 2007b). Two specific proposals are included in the OECD report. The first proposal comprises a call to enhance research into low-technology innovation, in which the Central University of Technology has some experience (for example, strengthening African clay pots for the tourism market). In a province with a limited skills base, such technological innovation could make a considerable difference. The second key proposal is that a national

match funding for research be made available for projects which first obtain some regional funding.

Lesson Three: Rethink the idea of commercialisation and knowledge transfer producing a third-stream income

The Free State has a weak industrial base and minimal regional innovation. Although the province has a stable agricultural base, the OECD report notes that many agricultural products leave the province unprocessed. This is compounded by the geographical distance between the province and the major economic hubs of Gauteng, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

In recent years, both universities in the province have emphasised the importance of generating alternative income through knowledge transfer and the commercialisation of knowledge. The University of the Free State has been especially productive in this respect, registering sixteen patents over the past five years. On the other hand, the recommendation in the OECD report takes a different and longer-term view in this respect, stating that the universities should

> Broaden the understanding of knowledge transfer, knowledge utilisation and exploitation and place less emphasis on immediate and direct financial return to the university (Puukka et al. 2012:32).

However, commercialisation policies and practices need to consider the regional capacity of the province. Using the notion of absorptive capacity, one of the findings of a recent study of the relationship between academics in the agricultural sector and regional stakeholders (Fongwa 2013) corroborates a finding of previous studies, namely that the capacity of a region to absorb new knowledge relates to the knowledge base of the region. Cohen and Levinthal (1990) conceptualise absorptive capacity as the level of human capital in the region which can facilitate knowledge uptake and application. Schmidt (2005) expounds on this notion by pointing out that knowledge transfer happens at three levels: a) across different sections of the same firm or industry; b) across different firms; and c) between institutions of higher education and industry. A fundamental aspect of the concepts of absorptive capacity and knowledge transfer is the knowledge distance between the transferring and the receiving institutions.

Muller (2010) notes that the current status of regional development is an important factor in relation to the type of regional engagement that would be required. As observed in section five above, the Free State is one of the poorer provinces in South Africa and has a limited industrial and knowledge

base. Although the OECD report is largely silent on the region's ability to absorb knowledge, it is a factor mentioned quite often in the literature (Cohen & Levinthal 1990). An analysis of the Free State Growth and Development Strategy (Free State Provincial Government 2013) shows that the provincial government has a very low expectation in respect of what the two universities could contribute towards the development of the province (Fongwa 2013). The word 'knowledge' appears fewer than ten times in the 81-page document, while the terms 'innovation' and 'university' are both used only once. On the other hand, the word 'skills' appears more than fifty times, suggesting that the provincial government places more emphasis on training through colleges than it does on research, knowledge and the potential contribution of universities. This conspicuous lack of regional demand hampers the level of knowledge transfer or engagement between the university and the region in many ways. Effective knowledge transfer, according to Siegel and Phan (2005), involves willingness both on the part of the producing side (supply) and on the part of the receiving or application side (demand). Similarly, Davenport and Prusak (1998) maintain that knowledge transfer involves two actions, namely transmission – which involves the sending of knowledge to a potential recipient – and the absorptive capacity displayed by that person or group or institution. Bramwell and Wolfe (2008) advocate for the *proximity effect* of firms located in close geographical proximity to one another. For these prerequisites to be achieved there is a need for closer collaboration and for the formation of networks and of trust among the stakeholders (Inkpen and Tsang 2005:158)

Conclusion

The notion of the third mission of universities has been debated extensively over the past two decades in South Africa. Despite all this debate, there remains a large degree of uncertainty in terms of strategic approaches and conceptual clarity. The notion of university and regional engagement suggests, in the main, that possibly the time has come to let go of 'third-mission' ideas and rather focus on a broader engagement with the region. Such a broader engagement should have a direct impact in terms of requiring academics to improve their research outputs, use their international linkages to ensure regional development and emphasise an appropriate link between what is taught, on the one hand, and how it relates to local labour needs, on the other. Third-mission ideas emphasise the fact that university staff should perform another function. Regional engagement suggests that staff should carry out their two main functions of research and teaching better, and in closer relationship with the immediate environment. This notion seems even more important in Africa and the developing world (as the Free State case study also suggests), where

research outputs, in terms of international benchmarks, seem to be mediocre, while teaching appears to be substantially delinked from the requirements of the labour market. In order to ensure the above, much closer relationships with industry and local employers are required, while there is ample space for funding mechanisms, and possibly also legislation, which could facilitate local partnerships. In addition to the above notes about rethinking regional engagement as opposed to community engagement, a number of key points should in conclusion be made about the future of higher education and regional engagement. Taking into consideration the lessons discussed earlier, it is suggested that a national policy response to regional engagement or to regional development (something that South Africa currently lacks) should be a priority. This might entail incentives to create regional platforms to increase linkages between universities and their respective regions. Such platforms should also improve the region's absorptive capacity by stimulating demand-side initiatives from regional partners.

Notes

1. HEIs in South Africa are classified into three broad categories: traditional universities, which focus on teaching and research; comprehensive universities with a more vocational dimension; and universities of technology, which are more technology-oriented (Department of Education 2001).
2. Matric is the equivalent of a university entrance qualification.

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African Languages Policy in the Education of South Africa: 20 Years of Freedom or Subjugation?

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the indigenous African languages policy in education debates in post-apartheid South Africa, and provides a policy review of language in education in the past 20 years of liberation in the South Africa. The research problem is that the post-1994 governments of South Africa stated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) that indigenous official African languages must be in the curricula of the education system. But the findings reflect that this constitutional mandate has not been accomplished in the twenty years of South Africa's liberation. Conclusions drawn are that the former two official languages used in the education policies of the apartheid South Africa, i.e. English and Afrikaans, have continued to be used in pretended implementation of indigenous official African languages in the curricula of education of a free South Africa.

Key words: Indigenous African languages, language policy in education, culture and heritage, African history, liberation, multiculturalism, biculturalism, monoculturalism, and Kiswahili.

Résumé

Cet article met l'accent sur la politique des langues africaines indigènes dans les débats sur l'enseignement en Afrique du Sud post apartheid et offre une revue de la politique de la langue dans l'éducation au cours des 20 dernières années passées de libération en Afrique du Sud. Le problème de recherche est que les Gouvernements post 1994 de l'Afrique du Sud déclaraient dans la constitution de la République d'Afrique du Sud (1996)

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que les langues africaines officielles indigènes doivent figurer dans les programmes du système éducatif. Mais, les constations montre que ce mandat constitutionnel n'a pas été accompli au cours des vingt années de la libération de l'Afrique du Sud. Les conclusions tirées sont que les anciennes deux langues officielles utilisées dans les politiques d'éducation de l'Afrique du Sud sous l'apartheid, c'est-à-dire, l'anglais et l'afrikaans, ont continué à l'être dans la prétendue mise en œuvre des langues africaines officielles indigènes dans les programmes d'enseignement d'une Afrique du Sud libre.

Mots clés : langues africaine indigènes ; politique de la langue dans l'éducation ; culture et héritage ; histoire africaine ; libération ; multiculturalisme ; biticulturalisme mono-culturalisme ; Kiswahili.

Introduction

The people of South Africa celebrated 20 years of freedom from apartheid rule on 27April 2014. They do not take this freedom for granted because they know what the liberation struggle cost them. At the same time, as they rejoice over the achievements they have made, they must critique their challenges. The use of African languages in education is one such challenge because, firstly, the knowledge, traditions and heritage that these languages convey are not part of the formal education conducted in English and Afrikaans; and the absence of these African languages in the system of education in the long run results in the loss of an African knowledge system and linguistic productivity. To give a practical illustration of what I infer by this, I have argued in a different article that:

> For example, in medicine, health, heritage, arts and culture, black students enter universities with knowledge [acquired] in the medium of their respective African languages and cultures from their communities about herbs that grow naturally in the vegetation of their back yards. They also possess a knowledge about their heritage, arts and culture that is not necessarily housed in buildings called museums or galleries, but are carried in their heads and preserved in intangible ways that are then passed on to their children.[1]

In particular, the African majority in South Africa must be concerned about the role and place of African languages in their national education. Secondly, Neville Alexander makes the point that ''an English-only or even an English-mainly policy – prevents the majority of the people from gaining access to

vital information and, therefore, from full participation in the democratic political process.'[2]

According to the 2013 Conference on 'Multilingual Education in Africa':

> The key challenge is that the inherited formal education systems have remained culturally and linguistically alien to the majority of the populations in Africa; many Africans are not convinced about the usefulness of education, which was designed to satisfy colonial, missionary and postcolonial purposes. The Youth Forum of the 2012 ADEA Triennial consultation process demands 'that African culture, history and languages be placed at the heart of the development of education and training … so that skills are acquired in connection with our specific heritage.'
>
> Where formal school education targets one language, it is usually the official or international language. People are thus trained for a limited linguistic and sociocultural space, and other relevant linguistic and socio-cultural spaces are neglected.[3]

That is why I think it is worth reviewing the past two decades of our liberation in relation to African language policy in education. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) provides a perfect entry point.[4] A constitution is a document that protects the rights of the citizens of a concerned nation, irrespective of their religion, caste, creed, sex or physical appearance. A constitution, thus, can be safely said to be a social contract between the government and the people it governs.

The word 'languages' appears 26 times in the constitution of post-apartheid South Africa; and this word is cited in connection to the African languages (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996). This in itself is a recognition of the importance of African languages in a liberated African country; and that is very important because, for the first time, the Constitution of South Africa refers to all the African languages as being the official languages of the country. The previous governments of South Africa, from the Union of South Africa in 1910, only had English and Dutch, which (in the case of Dutch) was later replaced by Afrikaans, as the only two official languages of South Africa until 1994.

The Constitution placed clear emphasis on African languages as the vehicle that should be used as the medium of instruction in schools. Firstly, section six of chapter 1 (Founding Provisions) of the Constitution classifies the 11 official languages of the Republic of South Africa.These include Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu'. Also included are 'the Khoi, Nama and San languages';

and then the constitution goes on to state that 'recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages.'[5]

Secondly, in chapter 2 (Bill of Rights) that addresses the language of instruction in schools, section 29, point 2 of the Constitution states:

> Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account:
> (a) Equity;
> (b) Practicability; and
> (c) The need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.[6]

Thirdly, in the same chapter, on 'language and culture', section 30 states:

> Everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights.[7]

Fourthly, in the same chapter of bill of rights, that speaks to 'cultural, religious and linguistic communities', section 31, point 1 states,

> Persons belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community:
> (a) To enjoy their culture, practise their religion and use their language; and
> (b) To form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society (Ibid).

It is very clear that what the constitution says in the sections about 'languages', 'education', 'language and culture', and 'cultural, religious and linguistic communities', is that the official African languages must join the two former official languages, namely, English and Afrikaans, in the curricula and education system of South Africa. The starting point of explaining why this is necessary is to address the fundamental question of language in education through a review of literature on language policy in Africa.

Literature Review: Language Policy

The concern for The African languages in education policy of post-apartheid South Africa compels one 'to re-examine our entire colonial heritage',[8] to use the phrase by Ngugi wa Thiong'o. In his article, 'Europhone or African Memory', Thiong'o asserts that this process means having to continually examine our relationship to European memory in the organisation of knowledge. Wherever Europe went in the globe, it planted its memory. First on the landscape: Europe mapped, surveyed the land, and then named it.[9] The most provocative example of this is contained in President Mandela's address to the Joint Houses of Parliament of the United Kingdom on 11 July 1996.[10] His entire address is extremely relevant to the language question and the colonial heritage that Thiong'o challenges in 'Europhone or African Memory'. President Mandela told the British, 'to take only one of these - the Eastern Cape - it has such names as Port Elizabeth, East London, Grahamstown, King Williamstown, Alice, Albany, Somerset East, Fort Beaufort, Fort Glamorgan and simply, Queenstown.'[11] Precisely what this Mandela address expresses is that which Thiong'o articulates:

> It is in naming that we can so clearly see the layering of one memory over another, the indigenous African memory of place buried under another, a foreign alluvium becoming the new visible identity of a place. Europeans implanted their memory on the minds of the colonised. To name is to express a relationship, mostly of ownership.[12]

But the coloniser did not end there; Europe went further and planted its memory on the intellect. This was achieved by imposing European languages on the conquered. In Africa this meant raising European languages, in our case, English, Dutch and later Afrikaans, to the level of an ideal whose achievement was the pinnacle of pure enlightenment. But language, of course, comes with culture. For instance, in recruiting the new servants of the empire from among the colonised, Lord Macaulay believed that teaching English in India would produce a class of natives, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinions, morals and intellect, who would stand as interpreters between them and the vast masses of the owned. Language is a means of organising and conceptualising reality, but it is also a bank for the memory generated by human interaction with the natural social environment. Each language, no matter how small, carries its memory of the world. Suppressing and diminishing the languages of the colonised also meant marginalising the memory they carried and elevating to a desirable universality the memory carried by the language of the conqueror. This obviously includes elevation of that language's conceptualisation of the world, including that of self and otherness.[13]

Thiong'o re-asserts that this blindness to the indigenous voice of Africans is a direct result of colonisation. His explanation is that, during colonisation, Africans were controlled by forcing them to speak European languages – they attempted to teach children (future generations) that speaking English is good and that native languages are bad by using negative reinforcement. Language was twisted into a mechanism that separated children from their own history because their own heritages were shared only at home, relying on orature in their native language. At school, they are told that the only way to advance is to memorise the textbook history in the coloniser's language. By removing their native language from their education they are separated from their history which is replaced by European history in European languages. This puts the lives of Africans more firmly in the control of the colonists.[14]

Thiong'o argues that colonisation was not simply a process of physical force. Rather, 'the bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation.' In Kenya, colonisation propagated English as the language of education and as a result, orature in Kenyan indigenous languages withered away. This was devastating to African literature because 'language carries culture and culture carries (particularly through orature and literature) the entire body of values by which we perceive ourselves and our place in the world. Therefore, how can the African experience be expressed properly in another language?[15] In essence, the formal education of schooling and university does not provide the African child with linguistic tools to experience the world with his/her own lenses.

> Our various fields of knowledge of Africa are in many ways rooted in that entire colonial tradition of the outsider looking in, gathering and coding knowledge with the help of 'native' informants and then storing the final product in a European language for consumption by those who have access to that language.[16]

Since its creation in 1963, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU) has placed the language issue at the centre of its preoccupation. As stated by Kalema, 'the record of the Organisation of African Unity, OAU, on its commitment to Africa's indigenous languages is anything but impressive.'[17] Article XXIX of the founding Charter of the OAU of May 1963 states that 'the working languages of the organisation and all its institutions shall be, if possible African languages, English and French, Arabic and Portuguese'; this is a clear indication of that commitment. Subsequently, many resolutions have been passed calling for a change of the *status quo* regarding the language issue in Africa. In that regard, while calling

for the linguistic liberation and the unity of Africa, Mateene, observes that 'years after the attainment of political independence, the majority of African independent states have continued to practise linguistic policies inherited at the time of independence, where, on the whole, foreign colonial languages are more favoured than the languages of the African continent.'[18]

Many African countries have experimented with diverse forms of bilingual and multilingual education. Several countries are mainstreaming mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Niger and South Africa.[19] Take Ethiopia, for example. Despite being one of the poorest countries in the world, it has developed 23 languages for use as mediums of instruction in primary schools and advanced 13 languages for similar use in about 15 years.[20] African languages can be used in all spheres of life. Ethiopia's education system aims at multilingual language proficiency with English occupying an important place even though English is very little used (only by 0.3 per cent of the population in 2007). A comparison of students' performance in the Ethiopian system showed that students performed well in mother tongue-based multilingual education programmes.[21] In other cases, like in Mali, research and practice prove that languages develop through use and that African languages can be used as languages of education right up to the end of tertiary education. For example, in Mali, one committed university professor teaches physics and chemistry in Bamana language of Mali. It is technically possible for every African language to be used at this level of academic discourse.[22]

A challenge that is experienced in language policy in education relates to the lack of awareness about the difference between using a language as a medium of instruction and teaching a language as a subject. When a language is taught as a subject using second language teaching methodologies, no prior knowledge of the language is needed at the beginning. However, the use of a language as language of instruction requires prior knowledge because it is the medium through which new content matter must be understood and academic literacy is learned. Research from neighbouring country, Botswana, can illustrate this: it revealed that the switch from one medium of instruction (Setswana) to another in Year 5 (English) was a major reason why students dropped out or had to repeat the class. They simply did not master the language of instruction and testing, which, in this case, was English. At the beginning of Year 5, they had had exposure to only 800 words, but needed 7,000 to be able to follow the curriculum. Students who learn through a language of instruction which they do not master are hence disadvantaged in assessments (also in international assessments).[23] Research has shown that when students express themselves in a language they master in terms of content they get much better results

in assessments. It is those who speak English and Afrikaans as their mother tongue that benefit from the South African education system right now. All the others are thoroughly disadvantaged.

Many people, and especially English and Afrikaans speakers in decision-making positions, hold on to the belief that introducing African mother tongue-based multilingual education will be too expensive. Yet, costs need to be compared to the benefits. Research and current effective practice in education suggests a much higher rate of return on investment from mother tongue-based multilingual education in the medium and long-term, which justifies higher expenses.[24]

Herman M. Batibo, a professor at the University of Botswana shares his experience on the language policy in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region with the identification of a five-fold policy options, namely the inclusive policy, the partially inclusive policy, the exclusive policy, the hierarchical policy, and adoption of the status quo.

The Inclusive Policy

This is a policy which aims at promoting all the indigenous languages to a national level, so as to be used in all public functions, including education, as far as possible. This is the policy adopted by Namibia, where English is the official language, but all the other languages are national languages. Up to now, Namibia has managed to involve 16 languages (out of 26) in education.[25] Although this policy allows true democracy and equality of all the languages, it has many challenges, particularly the costs for human and material resources.

Partially Inclusive Policy

This is a policy in which only a selected number of indigenous languages, usually the major ones, are promoted and used in education and other public functions. This is the case of a number of countries, like South Africa (with its 11 official languages, out of 23 languages in the country); Zambia (with seven languages used in education, out of 38 in the country); Mozambique (with its six languages used in education, out of 33 in the country); Malawi (with its three languages that are supposedly used in education, out of 14 languages in the country). One of the challenges of this policy is how to decide on which languages to promote and which to leave out. The number of speakers may not be the only criterion. Also, in most cases, the phase of implementation of these policies has tended to lag behind. For example, in Malawi, Chitumbuka and Chiyao are supposed to be used in education and the media in the same way as Chichewa. But, this has not been the case. Also, in South Africa, although the 11 official languages are supposed to be used equally in public, only English and, to a large extent, Afrikaans are used in most official and technical domains.

The remaining nine languages are still lagging behind twenty years into the country's liberation.

Exclusive Policy

This is a policy in which only one indigenous language, usually the most dominant in the country, is selected, as the national language, to be used in all public functions, including education. This is the case of Kiswahili (Tanzania), Setswana (Botswana), Malagasy (Madagascar) and Chichewa (Malawi, especially during the time of President Kamuzu Banda).[26]

Hierarchical Policy

The case of Zimbabwe presents his fourth policy in which the status of a language is graded hierarchically, starting from official, national, provincial, district, areal and then localised. At each level several public functions would be allocated. The functions may involve education, media, judiciary, local administration, trade and commerce or village meetings, with the higher functions being given to the languages at the top. This is a policy which was adopted in Zimbabwe at one time, although not fully implemented. The policy allows the use of a selected local language in an area where the people need it best, and reserves the nationally dominant languages to deal with the more nationally based functions. In this case, the localised languages would be used for locally based functions like pre-school, primary education or village meetings. Although this policy allows communities to use their languages in different public domains, it may deny some people the use of their language in key domains. According to Hachipola, for example, in Zimbabwe, only national and provincial languages, like Chishona and Sindebele are used in education and the media and only the national language, Chishona, is used in local administration. Also, the policy may make speakers of localised languages switch from one medium to another, as they move to higher education.[27]

In May 2001, the Zimbabwean poet, Fungai Machirori, wrote an article for *Mail & Guardian* newspaper in South Africa, titled 'Incomplete Me', in which she lamented an elite education in her country that is devoid of any real sense of place. I quote her colonial education experience in 1997 Bulawayo because it has relevance for language policy in South Africa:

> It was when I was 15 that I remember completely disowning something African for the first time. My high school English teacher had given us the task of coming up with a poetry project that entailed analysing the life and works of one poet. Completely stuck and uncertain about how to go about the assignment, I approached my teacher.

> 'Why don't you consider looking at some of the works of an African poet, then?' she asked me, after I'd walked her through my challenges with Keats, Shakespeare, Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes. To say I felt exasperated would be an understatement. I felt shattered that she thought my efforts would best be served by looking at some poet whose works we'd never studied before, a poet from an impoverished continent whose verse I imagined would be equally lacking. Surely there was some contemporary Western poet who could fit the bill better, I thought to myself.
>
> More than ten years later, I'm ashamed to admit that these thoughts then coursed freely through my mind. But I can't deny them because for many years my identity was based on deficient ideas of what being African meant and means to the diverse people of this lovely continent. After attending a predominantly black government primary school in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second-largest city, I went on to a private girls' high school in the same city. By then, 1997, the racial make-up of the school was beginning to change after an era during which one might have been excused for thinking that the school was located in some semi-rural English country.[28]

Adoption of Status Quo

This is a policy that has been adopted by some countries, particularly those which were former French or Portuguese colonies. Such countries have decided to adopt the language policy left behind by the colonial administration, in which the ex-colonial language is not only the official language, but also the national medium that is used in national mobilisation. Although this policy enables the people to use a language which is technologically advanced and which links the country with the rest of the world, it has the disadvantage of only serving the interests of the elite, at the exclusion of the masses.[29]

The almost exclusive use of former colonial languages as medium of instruction and for running national affairs in most African countries leads to the exclusion of the vast majority of Africans, as they are kept on the periphery of the political and socio-economic mainstreams, while the minority ruling elites and middle class aspirants enjoy an unfair advantage. The elite enclosure uses the former colonial languages to protect their privileges. All this leads to misinformed choices of the language to be used in the education of African children because the former colonial languages are perceived as a passport to a better life, though it is difficult for the vast majority of Africans to acquire these languages as they are not part and parcel of their cultural

universe. As an old man from one rural village in Southern Mozambique once told Sozinho F. Matsinhe, professor and Executive Secretary of African Academy of Languages (ACL), while talking about literacy campaigns that were conducted in Portuguese 'I can't find myself in these things they are trying to teach me! You see, when I go to sleep, I see my dreams in my Tsonga and now I have to learn Portuguese, which is never there in my dreams!'[30] The old man's remarks appropriately summarise one of the main issues that are never properly addressed whenever the subject of language in education in Africa is considered.

Tanzania presented the most insightful example of language policy in education that I personally experienced during my field research on 'Kiswahili Language in the National Education of Tanzania' at the University of Dar es Salaam, and at the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), in September-October 2011.[31] As already explained above, most of the SADC countries have strived to promote one, several or all of the indigenous languages with the aim of enhancing local participation and fostering national unity and identity. But some countries, like Tanzania, decided to go further, especially motivated by the socialist ideologies of their founding president, Mwalimu Nyerere, in the 1970s and 1980s. At one time, it saw the English language as a remnant of colonialism and imperialism, and opted to apply a policy of subtractive bilingualism in which Kiswahili was gradually replacing English in all domains, including education and government business. Thus, Tanzania changed the status of English in the country from second to foreign language. English was no longer heard in any public places in Tanzania, except in institutions of higher learning. Even there at the University of Dar es Salaam in 2011, as I conducted my interviews with faculty members, I was told that Kiswahili language still dominates the student-teacher communication in the class and outside in comparison to English. 'The consequences', according to Batibo, 'were gravely damaging for Tanzania, which lost contact with the wider world, thus alienating itself socio-economically, technologically and culturally. Although English has been restored as the second language in Tanzania, the country is still recovering from this hard blow.'[32]

I have a different view. Tanzania was the only foreign country – in Africa and outside Africa – in which on arrival, when I landed at the Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar es Salaam, English or any other European language was not the *lingua franca* of the country; but Kiswahili, an African language, was the medium of communication. Everyone from taxi driver to students and professors at the university, communicates in Kiswahili. For the first time, I was in a foreign country where an African language was genuinely in the centre of all communications, and not a European language; and for me to do my fieldwork

research I had to purchase a Kiswahili-English to be able to communicate in this African language of a liberated African nation. The experience was profoundly African. The purpose of a country's or nation's language is to serve that country's citizenry; and not foreigners. English serves the interests of globalisation.

I want to end this literature review by returning the debate to South Africa. I do so by citing the following two studies, one titled, 'Mother Tongue Debate and Language Policy in South Africa' (2013), by Baba P. Tshotsho, at University of Heugh. Tshotsho's critical evaluation of the language policy rests on the argument that:

> The vision of the African National Congress (ANC) government of promoting all 11 languages is just a symbolic gesture and is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. The South African government has not yet provided the human resources and physical resources needed to promote multilingualism.[33]

Many agree with the idea that is presented of 'a symbolic gesture'; and it is a claim that is very difficult to dispute. That is my rationale for this twenty-year review to show with evidence from the terms of office of the five post-apartheid Ministers of Education, of Basic Education and of Higher Education and Training since 1994 the directions we have chosen to travel with language policy in education. At the same time, whilst I agree with the sentiments by Tshotsho, I do give the ruling party the benefit of doubt and even challenge it in this article by making six policy recommendations and policy strategies that I provide in the conclusion, which if implemented, will change this perceived 'symbolic gesture'; and the status quo of the language question in education forever.

The second study is 'The Case Against Bilingual and Multilingual Education in South Africa' (2002), by Kathleen Heugh, Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics, who wrote this occasional paper for *The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa* (PRAESA). She communicates one of the myths greatly associated with language policy in education, which says that 'bilingual or multilingual education is too expensive and we have only one option: English only (or mainly).'[34] Heugh attended a *Seminar: Review of Curriculum 2005* hosted by the Department of Education in Pretoria, on 22 January 2000. The seminar/workshop was designed to stimulate debate and initiate the curriculum review process. None of the presenters or panellists at any point made reference to the fact that our pupils speak a range of different languages or that this should be factored into the curriculum. When Heugh

challenged this, the panellists dismissed language as an issue, and indicated that it was too expensive to entertain multilingual education.

Heugh writes,

> I have, since 1993, pointed out that we spend a great deal on textbooks in English each year, and on teachers' salaries on the pretext that we are providing an education through the medium of English. While we do this, the majority of pupils who write matric fail this examination. Many others drop out before they reach matric. We spend a great deal of money, 22% of the national budget, on an education system which fails more than half of the learners who manage to stay at school until the twelfth year. Only 27% of the pupils who begin school in South Africa exit with a school-leaving certificate after the twelfth grade.
> From my own experience as an in-service teacher trainer, I know that most of the teachers with whom PRAESA comes into contact, and who teach in primary schools, do not themselves have sufficient English to teach through English. We do not hear them teaching in English in their classrooms despite the fact that they think they should do so and despite the fact that they tell us that they do teach through English. At best we hear teachers code-switching, but more often than not they are code-mixing (using two languages within the same sentence). The language model they provide for their pupils is a code-mixed model. This is the closest they can get to English medium and it is not English medium. Pretending that we can go for an English only or mainly option under these conditions or that we are really practising English mainly is not responsible and it reveals, unfortunately, a form of schizophrenia in which the truth is denied.[35]

That is why the preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa speaks of 'past injustices included the dehumanising, suppressing, diminishing and marginalising of African languages.'[36] The struggle was also about freeing the languages of the African; liberation in 1994 meant that the dominance of European languages on the African languages must end. That is why over the twenty-year period of democracy in South Africa, the Department of Education, and later Departments of Basic Education (DoE) and Higher Education and Training (DHET), have formulated, discussed and deliberated the various drafts on language policy in education.

First and foremost, it must be said that *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997)* expressed its future intention with the Language Policy of the country:

> The Constitution gives full recognition to the fact that South Africa is a multilingual country, and multilingualism is a prime objective of national language policy in general and further education, as determined by the Minister in terms of the South African Schools Act, 1996. South Africa's rich language inheritance offers many opportunities and challenges to the higher education sector, but thus far there has been no national policy framework within which the higher education institutions could establish their own institutional language policies and programmes, and which would enable the Ministry of Education to lend support to the achievement of national language goals.[37]

Post-Apartheid First Minister of Education: Sibusiso Bhengu

The first of this language policy came under the first Minister of Education in the post-apartheid dispensation, Sibusiso Bhengu, elected by President Mandela in 1994; and he occupied this post until 1999. It was called *The Language in Education Policy 1997* and was the first pronouncement on language in education by the new national department of education; it was the shortest policy document with only four pages. The policy was a point of departure on language debate at national level in South Africa in the post-apartheid era. Its preamble states:

> …this Language-in-Education Policy Document should be seen as part of a continuous process by which policy for language in education is being developed as part of a national language plan encompassing all sectors of society, including the deaf community.[38]

The policy acknowledges the country's cultural diversity as a valuable national asset and that is why the policy was tasked to promote the following:

- Multilingualism;
- The development of the official languages, and;
- Respect for all languages used in the country, including South African Sign Language.

The document confronted the problem with language policy that, I argue, continues to be the challenge of South Africa 20 years into our liberation with the question of African languages in education. That problem is that,

> The inherited language-in-education policy in South Africa has been fraught with tensions, contradictions and sensitivities, and underpinned by racial and linguistic discrimination. A number of these discriminatory

> policies have affected either the access of the learners to the education system or their success within it.[39]

Let me address the promotion of multilingualism and its association with multiculturalism because the policy document mentions it first. I prefer these definitions of multiculturalism that say 'the view that the various cultures in a society merit equal respect and scholarly interest'; and, 'the preservation of different cultures or cultural identities within a unified society, as a state or nation.'[40] The assumption then is that it takes the first priority in the list of tasks that must be achieved by the policy. The majority of South Africans who are Africans are already multilingual and multicultural because in addition to their various African mother-tongue languages, they were forced by the successive colonial and apartheid governments to learn English, Dutch and later Afrikaans; and off course each of these languages were learnt with their cultures. In contrast, you cannot say the same about those whose mother-tongue languages are English and Afrikaans, even when the speakers are Africans – white and black. They are not multilingual and they are not multicultural; or at least the majority of them are not. They are bilingual and bicultural or even in some cases, monolingual and mono-cultural; because some Afrikaans speakers say they don't speak English and some English speakers say they don't speak Afrikaans – a product of the unhealed wounds of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. By biculturalism and mono-culturalism here I mean 'the presence of two different cultures in the same country', and 'valuing of one's ethnic/cultural group over others' and, 'belief in one "right" culture', respectively.[41]

The point here is that the consequence of prioritising multilingualism or multiculturalism in the first *Language in Education Policy* of post-1994 dispensation is that it gave those whose languages were formally the official languages in the national education and curricula of the country to hide under the pretext of multilingualism and multiculturalism. In essence, as their languages continue to be the mediums of instruction and communication in education and national dialogues, they do not have to learn any other official language, i.e. African languages.

With the policies of nation-building and national reconciliation being at the centre of the first five years of post-apartheid South Africa in the presidency of Mandela, multilingualism and multiculturalism became the case of George Orwell's famous statement that 'all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.'[42] What was supposed to have been more equal than others are the two other tasks that this first *Language in Education Policy* was meant to promote, one, the development of the official languages (read all African languages); and two, respect for all languages (read all African languages) used in the country,

including South African Sign Language. Simply and importantly, because we have said in the preamble of our constitution, 'We, the people of South Africa, recognise the injustices of our past'; those past injustices included, dehumanising, suppressing, diminishing and marginalising of African languages. I would like to illustrate with a profound example of language by President Mandela that Zelda La Grange – whom he refers to as 'my secretary and a real Afrikaner *boere-meisie*'[43] – shares in her book, *Good Morning, Mr Mandela*:

> In the winter of 1995 the President [Mandela] was invited to a town in the Western Cape, Swellendam, a small village-like Afrikaans town along the Garden Route in South Africa, to receive the Freedom of the Town. It was an act of unity for a town that was dominated still by white Afrikaners to offer the President such an honour, and he agreed to accept it. Again, a few days prior to the event, he announced that he wanted me to go with him. He called me to Genadendal the day before, his official residence in Cape Town, and upon arrival asked me to sit down. Genadendal is the name of a small brown community in the rural Western Cape. He adopted the name for his official residence in Cape Town to pay homage to the community of Genadendal, which means something like 'valley of gratitude' when translated directly.
>
> He announced that he wanted to practice his Afrikaans and I had to help him with pronouncement as his entire speech was in Afrikaans. He fired away and unceremoniously started reading. At first I didn't have the heart to correct him but then he would look up every now and again to seek approval. I nodded like a real teacher and hated myself for appearing to be such a supremacist. Although I had been asked to help him, the situation presented was so typical of the apartheid era of a white overseeing what the black man was doing and the black man seeking approval from the white. I also couldn't really understand what he was reading and I had to adjust my concentration level. Then he wanted to re-read the speech for a second time. So I agreed – who wouldn't? – but this time I gathered some courage to add a few corrections. He was becoming more nervous to read and would peek at me over his reading glasses, this time seeking less approval but more affirmation. I nevertheless nodded…
>
> On our way I thought about his speech and wondered whether he was going to remember the words we'd practiced the previous day… Arriving in Swellendam he was received with open arms and insisted on first

> walking among the ordinary people, and when a little girl came to greet him on stage his face and body language opened completely. He spoke to her in Afrikaans too and she responded although she was shy. He enjoyed that interaction and I could see that he had a special connection to the child. He delivered his speech and remembered the words I had helped him with. It was perfect. *By delivering his entire speech in Afrikaans he reached out to the community's heart and people adored him for that.*[44]

President Mandela's act of 'delivering of his entire speech in Afrikaans' was not a rhetorical deed; but a genuine reality in practice of what the policy calls for: developing the official languages and respect for all languages. The President's mother tongue language is isiXhosa, but he made time, took all the time, learned and practised how to pronounce words and to deliver his speech in Afrikaans; that was being considerate and respectful, and with that gesture the President *'reached out to the community's heart*.' Very seldom you will find leaders, managers, CEO, and Presidents (in the twenty-year period under review) reaching out to the people they lead in this manner. It is this sincere Mandela example with the people that the African languages policy in education calls for.

Another point that I have issues with in the *Language in Education Policy 1997* is that it states:

> With regard to multiculturalism, globally and continentally (Africa), policy assumes that the learning of more than one language should be a general practice and principle in our society. The argument being multilingual should be a defining character of being South African. The multiculturalism approach was constructed also as a counter to any particular ethnic chauvinism or separatism through mutual understanding.[45]

Here the policy should have been explicit about this phrase: 'the learning of more than one language should be a general practice and principle in our society.' The majority, whose languages have been dehumanised for more than a century already, by force, have learnt 'more than one language.' So, this phrase does not really refer to this dehumanised majority or to the African languages. This part of the policy should have been clear and said 'the learning of more than one language should be an African language (other than Afrikaans) as a general practice and principle of our society.'

Another criticism, I argue, is that the objective in the policy to counter any particular ethnic chauvinism or separatism should not be achieved at

the cost of prioritising multiculturalism approach that benefits English and Afrikaans at the expense of all other African languages; as if 'any particular ethnic chauvinism or separatism' cannot be about the English people or the Afrikaners because ethnicity is colonially and in the segregationist language of apartheid associated with Africa and African people than it is with Europe, Europeans and white people.

Reading closely under the term of office of Minister Bhengu in the current Department of Basic Education website, the first key development reads 'the Language in Education Policy of 1997 is based on the principle of the right of children to be educated in their mother tongue whilst having access to a global language such as English.'[46] This originates from the constitution in chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights on 'education', that 'everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions.'[47]

That 'principle of the right of children to be educated in their mother tongue,' and that, 'everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice' that are enshrined in the constitution remain a dream for the African majority; whose mother-tongue languages are not English and Afrikaans because the principle has not been implemented.[48] But this principle of the right of children to be educated in their mother tongue continues to apply to the children, families and communities whose mother-tongues are English and Afrikaans. Let's drive the point home the more. Let's take an example of a medium English and Afrikaans school, where all teachers are white and speak either English or Afrikaans, or both, and not an African language; and where the African pupils whose mother tongues are neither English nor Afrikaans. These pupils are in the same class with their white pupil colleagues whose home languages are either English or Afrikaans, or even both. Say the African pupil, English pupil and Afrikaner pupil for some reason did not understand a concept or phrase in the class during the lesson. After class, each of these three pupils visit their teacher in the staff room to ask to clarify the concept or phrase, do you think the teacher will offer to repeat his/her explanation of the concept or phrase of the lesson in the language of the African pupil or in the languages of the white pupils? If these pupils meet the teacher individually, the expectations are that the teacher, knowing what the home languages of each of the white pupils are, will certainly communicate to them in either English or Afrikaans or even code-mixing (using the two languages in the same sentence). But it will certainly be different for the African pupil; the teacher in the first place does not speak any African language beyond being able to greet people in that language. 'In application, monoculturalism posits the individual's culture as normal and

valid. Other cultures are viewed as abnormal, inferior, or pathological, with corresponding differential treatment.'[49] So it is normal and valid that the teacher will provide his/her explanation to the African pupil in the teacher's language(s) that also happen(s) to be the medium of communication of the school; and not in the African language of the African pupil.

There are challenges (that on their own merit require writing another paper) to making this a reality, but they must be tackled head on like apartheid was challenged directly and was defeated; and, while it is wrong to suggest that the political and cultural leaders alone have to break the logjam, it is clear after many years of reflection and intervention at many different levels that political will and commitment are going to be the decisive elements if we are to move from the point where the European languages dominate our societies to a point where African languages do so.[50]

This 'principle of the right of children to be educated in their mother tongue' is very important; that is why it is in the country's constitution. It is a social contract between the government and the people it governs; but it is not executed and practised in the manner and instruction that is inscribed in the constitution. This is a social injustice that continues. The result is that today, as we celebrate 20 years of liberation, and in these times of freedom, many African children cannot communicate in their mother-tongues. How do we call this freedom?

Minister of Education: Kader Asmal

When Thabo Mbeki became the president of South Africa in 1999, he appointed Kader Asmal to replace Bhengu as the Minister of Education. Asmal came up with the *National Plan for Higher Education (2001)*; and in relation to languages, it stipulated that in the next 5 to 10 years, the Ministry would 'encourage the development of programmes in marginalised fields of study such as African languages, as well as the more general restructuring of curricula to reflect an orientation towards the African continent.'[51]

The Mbeki presidency was about African Renaissance; and for that, the envisaged changed enrolments by fields of study in the *National Plan for Higher Education* were important because the objective was to impact on the development of a common sense of nationhood which would play an important role in contributing to the development of the African Renaissance that was perceived to continue to be marginalised in higher education institutions. These include, in particular, fields of study such as African languages and culture, African literature (and not only in its English form) indigenous knowledge systems and more generally, the transformation of curricula to reflect the location of knowledge and curricula in the context of the African continent.[52]

This objective of encouraging the development of programmes in marginalised fields of study, i.e. in African languages and the transformation of the curricula to reflect the African knowledge production in the context of the African continent was never realised because of lack of political will and commitment, on the one hand; and the result of the absence of genuine transformation in the academic institutions.[53]

Minister of Education: Naledi Pandor

That is why when Naledi Pandor replaced Asmal as the Minister of Education in the second term (2004-2009) of President Mbeki; she instituted a commission to look into this obstruction to transformation in education. The consequence was the *Soudien Report* on *Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions*.[54]

> The framework for *Language Policy for Higher Education 2002* takes into account the requirements of the constitution, the advice asked and received from the Council of Higher Education (CHE), as well as the objectives and goals of the National Plan for Higher Education (2001). In particular, it recognises the need to ensure equity of access and fair chances of success for all who seek to realise their potential through higher education. The framework also reflects the values and obligations of the Constitution, especially the need to promote multilingualism. For the first time, a genuine attempt will be made to ensure that all of our official languages are accorded parity of esteem.[55]

Whilst the advice from the Council on Higher Education (CHE), *Language Policy Framework for South African Higher Education (2001),* communicated the development and promotion of the official African languages and Sign Language/s of South Africa, i.e., Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu, it communicated a great deal about 'Multilingualism in a Democratic South Africa.' For example, under this subtitle it asserted that 'the South African Languages Draft Bill postulates, among others, the following objectives of a democratic language policy in a multilingual South Africa'; 'to support economic development through the promotion of multilingualism'; 'to provide for the learning of South African languages by all South African citizens in order to promote national unity and multiculturalism.'[56]

Following on the *Language-in-Education Policy* (1997) of the Bhengu era, Asmal did not change anything about languages. Using different words he said the same things:

> Learners should study by way of either their home language or English and their home language. In this way it should be possible for all learners to learn by way of their most familiar language. This is a right enjoyed in practice today by English and Afrikaans speakers alone. The implementation of this policy requires provincial-level action, to which end we would like to provide some guidelines.[57]

The guidelines came in the form of two main values that the department wished to promote in the area of language:

> Firstly, the importance of studying through the language one knows best, or as it is popularly referred to, mother tongue education; and secondly, the fostering of multilingualism. We do believe that an initial grounding in mother-tongue learning is a pedagogically sound approach to learning. We also believe that multi-cultural communication requires clear governmental support and direction.[58]

Whilst the policy content is clear about the critical importance of the mother-tongue language in the education of the learner, again during the tenure of Asmal multilingualism and multiculturalism became more equal and important than the individual mother-tongue.

Speaking at a conference on Language Policy Implementation in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in 2006, Pandor said, regarding language in education, that the Department of Education had published a policy to give effect to the provisions of the Constitution, Section 29(2). The *Language in Education Policy (1997)* and the *Language Policy for Higher Education (2002)*, noting that the provisions were designed to promote multilingualism in the education sector. Their aim is to ensure that all South African languages are 'developed to their full capacity while at the same time ensuring that the existing languages of instruction (English and Afrikaans) do not serve as a barrier to access and success.'[59]

In this review, I have tried to show by policy statements of the various three ministers of education (Bhengu, Asmal and Pandor) of the post-apartheid governments that multilingualism and multiculturalism have taken an elevated priority over Section 29 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa that says: 'everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice...' Those who continue to receive education in their official languages are not the African people who are the majority because in practice it is not their African languages that are 'the official languages' that communicate their education.

Minister of Basic Education & Minister of Higher Education and Training:Angie Motshekga and Blade Nzimande

In 2009 Jacob Zuma became the president of South Africa, and the Department of Education was divided into the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). At the beginning of 2014, Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga said in a written reply to Parliament that her department was piloting the Incremental Introduction of African languages (IIAL) in schools all over the country. This is in line with *ANC 53rd National Conference Resolutions, Mangaung 16-20, 2012,* which states that 'we should ensure the development and promotion of indigenous language, with a view to include (sic) the programme in the curriculum. And that an indigenous language policy which seeks to ensure that one African language should be compulsory in schools depending on the region should be developed in 2014.'[60] She said the purpose of the pilot is to identify challenges in the implementation of IIAL in order to inform full-scale implementation in 2015. The department said the pilot project was targeting the introduction of the previously marginalised African languages in schools where an African language was currently not on offer. Furthermore, the department said it was cognisant of the immensity of the challenge and said that was why it was not rushing the implementation. After 20 years, we still do not see the urgency to implement an African language policy in education. When a policy on English language and/or Afrikaans language was promulgated by the previous governments, education departments, institutions of higher education and schools automatically obeyed; they found means to execute that language policy and it became a legislated law of the country. Why should policy on African languages in education be different?

The *National Plan Commission Vision for 2030* (which is South Africa's strategic national development framework and government policy for 2013-2030), speaking about 'Improving Education, Training and Innovation' emphasises the importance of African languages or mother tongue; and recognises them as an integral part to education, to science and technology, to development and that these languages must be preserved. Furthermore, it acknowledges that languages carry knowledge.[61] What must be stressed here is that the knowledge that the language carries is that of its people, community and society; meaning that, the continuing absence of the African languages in our education and its curricula denies the African learner – white and black – his or her knowledge of self, family, community, society, country, region and the African continent.

Bantu Steve Biko further explains this in *I Write What I Like* (Chapter 15, 'What is Black Consciousness'), how the absence of one's language,

and not using your own African language can help in the development of an inferiority complex. The extract is from Biko's evidence in the SASO/BPC (South African Students' Organisation/Black People's Convention) Trial given in the first week of May 1976; and the exchange that follows is between Biko, the defence lawyer, Advocate David Soggot (assistant counsel for Defence) and the trial judge, Judge Boshoff:

> ***Soggot:*** Is your concern not so much the restructure of the word 'black' in the world of linguistics so much as to alter the response of black people to their own blackness?
>
> ***Biko:*** It is certainly directed at man, at the black man.
>
> ***Soggot:*** And I think you were talking about your understanding of the black man's own sense of inferiority and self-hatred and all that?
> ***Biko:*** Yes.
>
> ***Soggot:*** In the world of language, how does the black man figure, how does he feel?
>
> ***Biko:*** Yes I think this is another area where experiences of well, let me say difficulties that I have experienced. We have a society here in South Africa which recognises in the main two languages, English and Afrikaans as official languages. These are languages that you have to use at school, at university I mean, or in pursuit of any discipline when you are studying as a black man. Unfortunately the books you read are in English, English is a second language to you; you have probably been taught in a vernacular especially during these days of Bantu education up to Standard 6; you grapple with the language to JC [Junior Certificate] and matric [Grade 12], and before you conquer it you must apply it now to learn discipline at university. As a result you never quite catch everything that is in a book; you certainly understand the paragraph, (I mean I am talking about the average man now, I am not talking about exceptional cases) you understand the paragraph but you are not quite adept at reproducing an argument that was in a particular book, precisely because of your failure to understand certain words in the book. This makes you less articulate as a black man generally, and this makes you more inward-looking; you feel things rather than say them, and this applies to Afrikaans as well – much more to English than to Afrikaans; Afrikaans is essentially a language that has developed here, and I think in

many instances in its idiom, it relates much better to African languages; but English is completely foreign, and therefore people find it difficult to move beyond a certain point in their comprehension of the language.

Soggot: And how does this relate to the black man or in particular to the black students as inferiority?

Biko: An example of this for instance was again during the old days of NUSAS [National Union of South African Students] where students would be something that you as a black man have experienced in your day to day life, but your powers of articulation are not as good as theirs; also you have amongst the white students a number of students doing M.A., doing Honours, you know, in particular quarters, highly articulate, very intelligent. You may be intelligent but not as articulate, you are forced into a subservient role of having to say yes to what they are saying, talking about what you have experienced, which they have not experienced, because you cannot express it so well. This in a sense inculcates also in numerous students a sense of inadequacy. You tend to think that it is not just a matter of language, you tend to tie it up also with intelligence in a sense, you tend to feel that that guy is better equipped than you mentally.

Judge Boshoff: But why do you say that? Isn't English the official language of SASO?

Biko: Yes, it is.

Judge Boshoff: Well now, but your complaint is against the language but it is just the very language that you are using?

Biko: No, no, I am not complaining against the language, I am merely explaining how language can help in the development of an inferiority complex.[62]

Pandor was the first post-1994 Minister of Education to *seriously* express concerns about the marginalisation of the African languages in our education. Being the first African woman Minister of Education, that anxiety is understandable because as a mother, she is the first teacher of her children, during pregnancy and from birth; she is the carrier of knowledge passed to children, and the home is the first school where she teaches and the first

language the child speaks is the language of the mother. Pandor's concerns resulted in the Soudien Report, named after the committee's chairperson, Professor Crain **Soudien,** that she had commissioned. The report made these important pronouncements under the subtitle of 'Language Transformation':

> Language is the key to understanding oneself; it is the key to understanding others; and language mastery is the window to success in life – certainly in education. In essence, language affirms the individual; and it serves as a means of communication and, therefore, facilitates social cohesion. Its benefits are felt at both the individual and social level. Success in life and in education is organically related to language mastery. However, there is a prevailing tendency to be dismissive or sceptical of the seriousness of the language question.
> The language issue is … at the heart of the education crisis in our society. Language is the gateway to culture, knowledge, and people. The more languages one masters, the more one has access to other cultures, to more knowledge, and to more people… [It] must be stress[ed] that the mastery of [the] language in which the subject is taught is the prerequisite to the mastery of subject matter. To this extent, the Eurocentric character of our education, at the heart of which has been the use of European languages, has constituted a barrier to the successful education of the masses of African people. The African student has to make the acquaintance of the subject through a language [that is] not his or her mother-tongue. If the African student did not master the particular foreign language in childhood, alongside mother tongue, then the foreign language in which instruction proceeds becomes a tension-generating factor, for most students, which interferes with the mastery of the subject matter.
>
> The role of language is therefore critical to higher education transformation, as it impacts on access and success, affirms diversity, while the right of a student to 'instruction in the language of his or her choice, where this is reasonably practicable', is afforded by the Constitution. It is no wonder then that language policy is the subject of contestation in higher education institutions. In this regard, all institutions are committed to multilingualism in one form or another, including the development of African languages as academic languages, and the introduction of African languages as languages of communication. However, more often than not, this commitment remains symbolic, for a range of factors.[63]

Continuing Pandor's anxieties with the downgrading of African languages in education was Dr Blade Nzimande, the Minister of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), who has probably made the greatest uproar and anger about the state and mis-placement of African languages in the curricula of our education. He expressed this in his mother-tongue, isiZulu when he said: '*Akukwazi ukuba yithi kuphela ekuthiwa sifunde isingisi nesibhunu bakwethu, kodwa ezethu iyilimi nabanye bangazifundi'* ('we cannot be expected to learn English and Afrikaans, yet they do not learn our languages'). He might as well have added, '*siphethe!'* ('Yet we are in power!')[64] The minister was speaking in Pretoria in 2011 at the launch of the Teacher Education and Development Plan for the next 15 years. It is worth noting that Nzimande is the first Minister of Education since 1994 who did not talk and prioritise multilingualism or multiculturalism. He is clear that what needs to happen is that students learn and study the African languages in higher education and that all university students pass one African language course as a requirement for graduation.

In his foreword to *Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences, Final Report: 30 June 2011* Nzimande, referring to the legacy of apartheid education, said 'the fact that most children generally learn in a language that is not their home language – and is also the second or third language of their teachers – does not help either.'[65]

This Charter noted that there is an urgent need to address the perceived crisis and the real imbalances in the tertiary education system vis-à-vis the fields of the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), the report recommended that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) initiate a process to establish an Academy/Institute of Humanities and Sciences whose role will be amongst others, to create, in the first phase, five Virtual Schools that concentrate the scholarship of 150 PhD students in vital areas of HSS. 'The fifth Virtual School would focus on African Languages whose report on the Task Team for African Languages is still waiting.'[66]

So far the one institution of higher learning that has taken the Minister serious about the inclusion of an African language in the curricula of the Higher Education is the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). In line with the University Language Policy and Plan and its Transformation Charter which seeks to develop African languages as academic languages, Renuka Vithal, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning and Chair of the UKZN Language Board made the following pronouncements:

- All new students registering for undergraduate degrees for the first time at UKZN from 2014 will – unless they get exemption – be required

to pass or obtain a credit for a prescribed isiZulu module before they can graduate.

- This rule, approved in principle by the University's Senate, gives tangible expression to UKZN's language policy and plan which is intended to promote and facilitate the use of isiZulu as a language of learning, communication, instruction and administration.
- It reflects UKZN's commitment to the development of isiZulu as an academic language alongside English which at this stage remains the main language of learning and instruction. That is, all degree programmes continue to be offered in the medium of English, while a selection of modules are being offered in isiZulu.
- During the first phase of the implementation (up until 2018), students and staff will develop communicative competence in isiZulu and English sufficient for academic interaction. Appropriate credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing language courses will be made available by the University during this time.
- Each degree programme will determine the appropriate level and type of proficiency. This is in line with the University Language Policy and Plan and our Transformation Charter which seeks to develop African languages as academic languages (University of KwaZulu-Natal 2014).[67]

In its language policy, UKZN makes the argument that

> At a University where more than 60 percent of students are isiZulu-speaking, the institution has an obligation to ensure linguistic choices result in effective learning solutions. Additionally, in a country that continues to be divided on the basis on linguistic identities, language should serve to bring diverse learning communities together and promote social cohesion. The belief that indigenous languages cannot be used for high level thinking and research is a myth.[68]

In this sense, UKZN is the first South African university to make bilingualism a compulsory requirement in its curricula; and thus executing the mandate of the country's constitution in the specific areas of African languages. The non-isiZulu language speakers, by virtue of learning isiZulu language in the university curriculum, will learn the culture of amaZulu people as is the case when one studies English and Afrikaans.

Another university that comes close to UKZN in terms of language policy is Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape. The preamble of the Language Policy

of Rhodes University states 'The policy is committed to the intellectualisation of African languages and creating the conditions for the use of particularly isiXhosa as a language of learning and eventually also teaching.'[69] I say close because not all first-year students at Rhodes University study isiXhosa language. According to Dr Sam Naidu of the English Department at Rhodes University, speaking at Rhodes University's Multilingualism Colloquium in October 2014, the revised language policy affects each and every member of the Rhodes community:

> Whether you are a research student wishing to write your thesis in a language other than English or whether you are a gardener or caterer wishing to conduct your job interview in a language other than English, provision is made for your language rights.
>
> This growing awareness of and attention to the politics of language in higher education is a trend, which is firmly established at Rhodes. Whereas before the revision students could only learn isiXhosa as a second or additional language, today approximately 600 students are studying isiXhosa at both mother tongue and second language levels, including undergraduate, Honours, Masters and PhD levels as well as the vocation-specific courses including Journalism, Law, Education and Pharmacy.[70]

Whilst the University is aware that much work remains to be done to achieve its pronounced African language policy, this is a significant milestone for UKZN and calls for other institutions to follow nationally. Part of the work that remains to be done includes having name tags of the different faculties and buildings on campus in isiZulu. In my research in the education and curricula of Tanzania, I was impressed to notice that faculties of various schools, departments, offices of deans and Vice-Chancellors had signs in Kiswahili only and not in English or in both Kiswahili and English.

I argue that it is precisely because since 1994 the constitutional mandate that speaks to the African languages was not implemented in our national education system is the reason behind President Jacob Zuma's approval of the *Use of Official Languages Act No. 12 of 2012*; that came into effect on 2 May 2013. In a sense, the Act seeks to enforce specifically that which in the constitution addresses the official African languages. The South African Parliament promulgated this legislation to regulate the use of official languages in government. What this Act implies is that for South Africa to have a tangible language transformation, the national departments, national public entities, and national public enterprises

should adopt a language policy and establish their national language units within the 18 months of the commencement of the Act, i.e. between May 2013 and November 2014.[71] At end of October 2014, the Minister of Arts & Culture, Mr Nathi Mthethwa, extended the deadline for all national departments, public entities and enterprises to establish language units that formulate language policies to enable the public to obtain information in the languages of their choice. The new deadline is 2 May 2015. The Minister said he was deeply concerned about the slow implementation of this law. He warned that this will be seen as government failing to implement its own regulations:

> It is with grave concern that I note the slow progress with regard to the implementation of the Use of Official Languages Act (No 12 of 2012) that stipulated that all national government departments, public entities and public enterprises must have language policies in place by 2 November 2014.
>
> Lack of adherence to the Act will result in audit queries as it will be regarded by the Auditor General of South Africa (AGSA) as non-compliance to government legislation and regulations.[72]

The Minister has granted the extension under the following conditions:

- A status report on progress with regard to the implementation of the Act is received by 30 January 2015.
- All language policies, drafted in such a way that they are appropriate to the context and operations of national departments, public enterprises and public entities are gazetted for public comment by 31 March 2015.
- All language policies are adopted by 2 May 2015.
- The language units staffed by language professionals and other practitioners responsible for translation across all languages should be in operation by 2 May 2015.[73]

These justified complaints of 'the slow progress with regard to the implementation' and 'lack of adherence to the Act' by the Minister at the end of the historic year, 2014, that marks the twentieth year of South Africa's liberation from apartheid rule, bring us to the present-day state of affairs of the language policy.

What the legislation of this Act points to is the fact that whilst the democratic constitution of South Africa had enacted in 1996 that 'the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use

of these languages',[74] it has taken almost 20 years for the government to pass an Act that seeks practically and legally to *enforce* the use of all the official languages of the country – who are mainly African languages, including a sign language. Yet, we know with hindsight of the past two decades of our freedom that the passing of an Act does not necessarily mean its implementation.

Conclusion: Language Policy Recommendations and Strategies

Before I provide recommendations and policy strategies as a way-forward beyond the twenty-year anniversary of our liberation, I want to reiterate few upsetting concerns that are at the heart of writing this language in education policy review article.

One, we know that the implementation of what the Constitution pronounces about the official African languages in the education and curricula of South Africa and the implementation of the Use of Official Languages Act No. 12 of 2012 would be a costly exercise; just as it was expensive for the implementation of English and Dutch – and later Afrikaans – as the official languages in the South African education and curricula of the past and of its continuing present. This was (is) subjugation of the African languages. But what will be even more costly enterprise is if South Africa's education, both at basic education, higher education and training, continues to deny its majority citizens the languages that carry knowledge about themselves, their cultures and heritage.

Since 1994 we have had four African presidents in Mandela, Mbeki, Kgalema Motlanthe and Zuma; but during that twenty-year period none of '*My Black President'*, to quote Brenda Fassie's famous song, gave a State of the Nation Address in parliament in any of the official African languages. To stress this point further, Zuma is the most traditionalist African president in terms of openly identifying himself, from the outset of his presidency, with the amaZulu traditions of his ancestry, for example, his polygamous practices. Regardless his lack of a formal education, Zuma's greatest resource is his articulation of his mother-tongue, isiZulu. So it is a failure of serious consideration that in his first five-year term he never gave an address in parliament in this rich resource of his mother-tongue of which he has such a forceful and calming command. According to the *Census 2011* results, more than a fifth of the population speak isiZulu at home, and just more than 11.5 million people use isiZulu as their first language. By choosing to address the nation in English, a language that he does not command very well, President Zuma – and by extension, Presidents Mandela, Mbeki and Motlanthe – have excluded the majority of the citizens from accessing their speeches.

This is one challenge that, as we proudly celebrate 20 years of our liberation, we must confront head-on because how can we be free when we don't

write, speak and learn in our African languages? The education of a people or nation is useless if it teaches them nothing about themselves.

Having said all that, I would like to propose that, after twenty years (1994-2014), a direct confrontation is necessary to effect these policy recommendations and strategies that this language in education policy appraisal presents as a way forward.

Firstly, the post-apartheid government of the ANC should learn a lesson from the apartheid government and from its *Bantu Education* policy. Apartheid as a government policy succeeded because just as *Bantu Education* was an integral part of apartheid, so was the language in education policy was integral to both *Bantu Education* and apartheid. The entire plan worked perfectly, because all the component parts were in logical symmetry. It was no accident that the administration of apartheid language policy, the State Language Service (SLS) was located within the central Department of Education during the National Party rule.[75] The properly run machinery of the SLS has made the effects of this policy to be such that Bantu Education has developed a lifespan of its own – one which continues to outlive its parent, *Grand Apartheid*. The point being made here is that we have to be frank; there were never going to be any quick solutions to reverse or transform the process.

Secondly, the success of Kiswahili language as the language of communication in Tanzania throughout the Nyerere rule was because curriculum development and language policy developments through the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) were not kept separate from each other. This is a continuing South African problem: 'separate development'! We need integration of curriculum review policy and language review policy in both Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training.

Thirdly, we must implement what is inscribed in our Constitution pertaining to African languages and education, which UNESCO supports:

> Opt for valuing and developing African languages as the most vibrant means of communication and source of identity of the majority of the African people, and construct all language policies accordingly (e.g. accept African languages as official languages and as languages for exams).[76]

Fourthly, to move in the direction of executing this third point, we must delete in our minds the myth that there is no or not enough indigenous South African research undertaken in our country in the subject of languages in education. Volume of research is in abundance that points conclusively to the disastrous effects of attempting to teach mainly through English when conditions do not and cannot make this possible.

Fifthly, when the majority of the South African population speak African languages, it makes no sense to say that there are no 'qualified' people or teachers available to teach African languages. Right, there are no adequate personnel 'certified' or 'qualified'– as in certification and qualification – to teach these indigenous languages. The 'State Language Service (SLS)' of the current government (Pan South African Language Board – PSALB) should provide the mechanisms to select the young and the elderly speakers of African languages across the country – in rural and urban areas – for in-service-training to certify and qualify them to be proficient teachers of South Africa's indigenous languages in the school and higher education system.

Lastly, the slow progress on the implementation of national policies, such as this language in education policy that is meant to bring socio-cultural transformation to the entire education system, is hampered by the employment of unqualified personnel in key strategic positions in government. Reacting to this real threat, the Public Service Commission (PSC) of South Africa has compiled a damning discussion document that was tabled at its three-day high-level conference on Developmental State with the theme of 'Building a Public Service to Underpin a Developmental State in South Africa', on 11-13 November 2014 in Pretoria. The document says 'cadre deployment' is misused to reward undeserving, inexperienced and unqualified political party officials. The commission researched countries like China and Singapore, where cadre deployment is the norm and governing party members hold nearly 80 per cent of posts in the civil service. The document says in these countries, 'the ruling political parties have ensured that those deployed are qualified and the deployment of cadres has not undermined the meritocratic nature of the public service. But here at home, the civil service must appoint suitably qualified people based on experience – not just political considerations.'[77] In June 2014, there were ten vacant positions of Directors-General (DGs) that affect the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP). The PSC chairperson, Mr. Ben Mthembu, has warned that the state's inability to act decisively in the filling of senior positions in various national departments would impact on the implementation of the NDP. Amongst the problems he lists that exacerbates this situation are cadre deployment and policy uncertainty.[78]

The ANC Secretary-General, Gwede Mantashe, has defended the cadre deployment: 'You cannot expect the ANC to depend on people who are hostile to the position of the ANC. It will not work and the ANC will run into disarray because you will have graduates and businessmen and women who are competent, but who are hostile to the programme of the ANC. You can't expect that to work.'[79] In particular there is flight of black middle class and young people, the 'graduates' that Mantashe mentions, to the opposition is a

threat to the ANC's power at the polls. In the national elections in May 2014, the ANC scored a reduced majority of 62.15 per cent, the lowest level since it began leading South Africa's democratic government in 1994. The ANC's seats in the National Assembly went down to 249 from 264 in 2009 and 279 in 2004.[80] The African and black professionals who have continued to vote the ANC since 1994 feel marginalised by the cadre deployment policy of the ruling party when it comes to employment in the government where they are mostly needed to effect and implement the policies, i.e. language in education policy, for national transformation.[81]

It is about time – in fact overdue – to return to valuing and appreciating the professionals who have the practical working expertise, experiences, skills, capacity and training in the fields that the South African Government and its Public Service – across the national, provincial and local government departments – want to see transformed. Probably this is the most important policy recommendation and policy strategy that Government must prioritise. The implementation of all these five-fold policy recommendations, rest on the employment of these human resources, readily available, but currently experiencing marginalisation.

Dedication

Our mother, Mmaramoupi Nkomeng Toto, who turns 84 years on 22 February 2016. Re A Leboga Mme (thank you mother).

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Revitalising Higher Education for Africa's Future

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Abstract

Over the last two decades, funding pressures have forced reforms in the legal framework of public universities in Africa. 'Acts of Parliament' and strong government direct control that dominated governance regimes of higher education institutions have given way to broad-based councils with wide representation in university governance organs. The strong emergence of private higher education institutions in the continent has led to the development of alternative forms of institutional management different from those that previously dominated in public institutions. But most of these reforms have resulted in new governance concerns revolving around financing and management, quality of teaching and research, and institutional autonomy. Prompted by the implications of these new concerns, guided by a strong belief that governance frameworks should respect institutional autonomy and institutional management, and that tenets of shared governance are critical to building quality higher education systems in Africa, CODESRIA launched a number of research networks to document governance reforms so far undertaken and to determine how they are reshaping the mission of higher education institutions on the continent. This article provides a synthesis of the findings emerging from the various research networks.

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Résumé

Au cours des deux dernières décennies, les pressions pour le financement ont forcé les réformes dans le cadre juridique des universités publiques en Afrique. Les « Lois du Parlement » et la forte hégémonie directe qui dominaient les régimes de gouvernance des institutions d'enseignement supérieur ont donné place à des conseils élargis à large représentation dans les organes de gouvernance des universités. La forte émergence des institutions d'enseignement supérieur privées sur le continent a conduit au développement de formes alternatives de gestion institutionnelle différentes de celles qui dominaient auparavant dans les institutions publiques. Mais, la plupart de ces réformes ont eu pour résultat de nouvelles préoccupations en matière de gouvernance, tournant autour du financement et de la gestion, de la qualité de l'enseignement et de la recherche, et de l'autonomie institutionnelle. Incité par les implications de ces nouvelles préoccupations, guidées une forte conviction que les cadres de gouvernance devraient respecter l'autonomie institutionnelle et la gestion institutionnelle et que les principes de la gouvernance partagée sont essentiels à la construction de système d'enseignement supérieur de qualité en Afrique, le CODESRIA, lança de nombreux réseaux de recherche pour documenter les réformes de gouvernance jusqu'ici entreprise, pour déterminer la manière dont celles-ci remodèlent la mission des institutions d'enseignement supérieur dans le continent. Cet article fournit une synthèse des conclusions qui ressortent des divers réseaux de recherche.

Introduction

This paper draws on and summaries research findings from the CODESRIA Higher Education Leadership Programme (HELP). HELP is a recent initiative included on the council's research activities as a special programme on higher education leadership and governance. With the support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the programme was conceived to reflect on issues of governance and leadership in African universities especially during a period that the institutions are undergoing tremendous transformations in terms of their coverage, institutional and student diversity and curriculum offerings. The programme is in its final first phase. Under the programme, CODESRIA commissioned 14 different research groups, four books and a series of conferences and workshops. The research groups focused on various broad themes related to higher education governance. These are:

- Evolution of governance models and implications on academic mission of the Universities-broad oversight governance practices, including new funding models, and division of authority to nominate representatives to the governance bodies,

- Emergent practices in the working of governance bodies – University Councils, senates and faculty boards,
- Gender aspects of governance transformations,
- Processes of constituting leadership and implications to the day-to-day management of the institutions as academic institutions – how are VCs and other top management positions are filled and the implications of this on the management of the institutions,
- Role of faculty/academics and faculty unions, and how they are engaged in the leadership and academic processes of the institutions,
- Student governance (What frameworks exist to govern student academic and welfare conduct) and student involvement: participation in governance – how this is changing and in what direction and the implications on the evolution of the institutions as academic institutions,
- New leadership models and emergent practices in issues quality assurance.

The work from the various research groups document changes in governance practices taking place in the universities in their historical and contemporary contexts. These include indicators of the governance and management transformations that are taking place in the institutions, how the pressures for expansion and accommodation of entrepreneurial practices are impacting on the governance and management practices and implications on the academic culture of the institutions, processes of constituting various university governance organs such as councils, senates and student organisations, implications of increased privatisation on university autonomy over financial and academic matters, emerging forms of accountability (such as performance contracting for staff); and participation (of students, academics, business people, donors and the local community, for example) in the governance of the institutions. Central to the interrogation of these issues is to get a sense on the direction in which they are driving the institutions in terms of their academic missions.

The Context: Governance and How it Should Apply to Higher Education

Governance is a broad pillar, which encompasses rights-based issues and broad participation as well as effective delivery of crucial government services and development results. It includes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, support for democratisation processes and the involvement of citizens in choosing and overseeing those who govern them, respect for the rule of law and access to an independent justice system for all. It also

involves access to information, a government that governs transparently and is accountable to the relevant institutions and the electorate, and effective checks and balances both in terms of an effective legislature and decentralisation.

Globally, higher education institutions have been under pressure to change as their fast growth and contribution to economic success is seen as vital. The universities and other institutions are expected to create knowledge, to improve equity, and to respond to student needs – and to do so more efficiently (OECD 2003). They are increasingly competing for students, research funds and academic staff – both with the private sector and internationally. In this more complex environment, direct management by governments is no longer appropriate. The thrust of the debate regarding higher education governance in these contexts is to examine how the governance of higher education institutions can assure their independence and dynamism while promoting key economic and social objectives (OECD 2003). In these environments, higher education institutions need to develop a creative balance between academic mission and executive capacity; and between financial viability and traditional academic values.

The rising influence of the business enterprise model as an organisational ideal has in most countries constituted an increasing institutional contextual pressure for change over the last decades. Few doubt that the expectations that face universities and their performance are changing. A number of processes have been identified as drivers behind the changing ideals or values that institutional leaders are supposed to sustain (Bleiklie & Byrkjeflot, 2002). The rise of mass education during the 1980s and 1990s has made higher education and its costs more visible and contributed to a more intense focus on how higher education institutions are organised and managed. New ideas about university management and funding have come to the fore and drastically altered the ways in which higher education institutions are managed.

The idea that universities ought to be organised and managed as business enterprises and become 'entrepreneurial' universities (Clark 1998) has deeply influenced the debate about organisation and leadership in higher education. There are views that support new governance frameworks that include new alliances and forms of cooperation between economic enterprise, public authority and knowledge institutions. They argue that such an alliance is necessary and will have desirable consequences for higher education institutions and knowledge production (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1997; Gibbons et al. 1994). Those against these views have argued, on the other hand, that stronger external influence over academic institutions, symbolised by the rise of 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Leslie 1997) and the 'ruin' of the university as the cultural institution (Readings 1996), leads to the breakdown

of internal value systems that sustain academic freedom and independent, critical scholarship. Both positions tend to share the assumption that a radical change has taken place in systems of higher education governance and focus on how new ideals and policies based on those ideals have changed the operating conditions for universities. The implications of such changing expectations are, however, contested issues. Two different positions/models of universities governance have been articulated in the literature. These are:

- A stronger role for central authorities in the determination of university objectives and modes of working. This is true of universities which used to be under detailed central controls and those that used to enjoy large degrees of autonomy, such as the Anglophone universities (Kogan et al. 2006; Musselin 1999, 2004; Neave 1998).
- The creation of powerful managerial infrastructure which now parallel and, to some extent, replace the academic structures of deans, heads of departments and professors. In the latter case the implication is that government by professionals or academics which used to be based on collegial decision-making bodies have been integrated in the administrative line of the organisation and thus become part of top-down decision-making structures.

This reverses the basis of legitimacy and the movement of decision-making premises. Whereas decision making used to be based on collegiate bodies that, at each level of the organisation, were composed of representatives from the organisational level below, decisions are now often entrusted to leaders who are appointed by and supposed to implement the policies of leaders on the organisational level above their own such that departmental chairs are appointed by deans and deans by vice-chancellors. The creation of directorates concerned with the business development, marketing, quality assurance, international connections of the university have been part of this governance reforms.

In many countries the power of academically-dominated senates has been paralleled or replaced by Management Boards or university councils who incorporate representation from the world of business. These and their chairpersons in particular reinforce the corporate nature of the reformed university. This approach has, in many instances, reduced the influence of collegial approaches and the power of the faculty even in determining the academic direction of the institutions.

In Africa, university governance and leadership have been troubling issues that the institutions have had to confront over the years. During the first decade

of independence (1960-1970), university governance in most African countries was closely tied to the state mainly due to funding relationships. During this period, governance reform movements in the universities were about democratisation and the inclusion of staff and students in decision-making (University World News 2009). From the 1980s, however, there has been a decline of higher education in terms of funding from governments and student enrolment in most of Africa, and this includes erosion in management capacity, facilities and academic delivery capacities (Kinyanjui 1994; Mamdani 1993; Saint 1992). The fiscal crisis and the resultant decline in state funding were considered a major cause of the decline; and this decline was blamed on bad governance practices and called for the design of new ones. From the 1980s, the governance debate shifted toward issues of efficiency and accountability, accentuated by the introduction of New Public Management (NPM), which altered the structure and policy processes of public bodies in an effort to make them more efficient and effective. Henceforth, reforms in higher education in Africa focused on governance issues not as an end in itself, but to look for a strategy of financing alternatives to promote an expanding system of higher education and managing the universities more efficiently and effectively (Sanyal 1995). The discourse on higher education governance in Africa in most of the 1990s, entailed a much more direct ideological and political attack on the institutional and professional autonomy of universities which often resulted in a semblance of autonomy on the part of the institutions (autonomy to generate and spend with less government oversight); with little regard to the quality of the academic processes in the institutions.

Today, a variety of new types of higher education institutions exist. Student demographics, access and delivery modes have changed too. In the midst of these changes, traditional modes of higher education governance and leadership are slowly disappearing. Central to these changes is a constant questioning whether the new governance regimes are responding well to the academic mission of the institutions. This is especially so given the general perception of poor quality academic programmes in the institutions that are commonplace. Reading through the literature and findings emerging from the field, there is a feeling that in most African universities coming out or struggling to come out of the financial crisis of the 1980s, and 1990s, good governance and leadership has meant the capacity of the institutions to generate own revenue outside government provisions. The higher non-government revenues are used to run the institutions, the more that is seen as a benchmark for better governance practices. Such a notion leaves out the nature of management practices and processes within the institutions required to build and sustain robust higher education institutions for Africa's development. Such issues as shared governance, meaningful academic reforms,

strategic planning, consultation, transparency and accountability to stakeholders – students, lecturers, parents and the public – satisfaction, as well as the role of the university in development are increasingly receding from consideration. Not surprisingly, despite the much talked about transformations, tensions that dominated the institutions during the first two decades of independence between academics and the political establishment over broad issues of institutional autonomy and academic freedom are re-emerging. Only that this time, the tensions are between university management, academics and students over the sharing of dividends and spoils from the entrepreneurial cultures that the institutions have embraced (Oanda 2011).

Key Emerging Trends on Governance and Implications

Constitution of New Oversight Bodies and their Effectiveness

One of the most fundamental changes in governance has been the receding of direct government involvement in the management of universities. This has taken two forms. First the practice where presidents of countries were also chancellors has been largely done away with. New university Acts are now in place which spell out clear guidelines on how university governance and management bodies are constituted and the qualifications of office holders. The second development has been the establishment of various oversight bodies to provide oversight for accountability and quality assurance on behalf of governments. The various studies document changes that have, in theory, removed direct government control from the day-to-day management of the institutions. Over the last two decades, the studies reveal that most universities studied have moved from the political governance model, under which the universities were established as national institutions at independence. University Acts that created the institutions as national public institutions have been repealed and new charters awarded. Where this process has not been accomplished, there is still high degree of interference from the political establishment on how the institutions are managed on a day-to-day basis.

New higher education councils have been created to directly provide governance oversight for the institutions. But the new oversight bodies are largely unfunded and work as government statutory bodies. The studies have also indicated the emergence of an amalgam of various governance models (not one single model is dominating). For example;

1) The corporate managerial model: most of the institutions adopted this from the 1990s as a response to designing strategies to generate resources outside government. Strategic plans in the institutions chaired by strategic

planning committees replaced university budget committees most of which were based in education ministries; university curricular were reorganised and more vocational-oriented courses were introduced to offer what were considered 'market-oriented programmes'; new mission statements were drawn, often including the fact that the institutions were focusing on international programmes and quality assurance offices and quality audits and evaluations were included as management instruments in the institutions. The data from the various themes show that these new centres of governance and institutional management increasingly gained clout over traditional academic units as new centres of power in the institutions. The studies also document how this period saw the decline and suppression of academic and students associations as centres of university governance, despite their legal recognition in University Acts.

2) The College governance model: Governance reforms in some instances have entailed the dismantling of the universities into various independent colleges and directorates. It would seem from the studies that most of the flagship universities are moving towards the college model as a way of managing the expanded university system. The new governance and management changes in the universities have also transformed the manner the institutions are managed on a day-to-day basis in terms of authority and reporting structures.
3) The third model emerging is a hybrid model of the first two. Here, and as data from case studies point out, there is a balance between collegial and corporate models. Government still retains some regulatory power, as is happening through the national councils. Both government and the universities also allow a degree of private sector participation in governance. The new frameworks allow for the nomination of individuals to represent the private sector in university councils. The national councils also include membership from the private sector. At the institutional level, however, there seems to emerge strong centralised bureaucracies revolving around the leadership of vice-chancellors and new bodies such as management boards that tend to contradict the traditional role of university senates. This model seems to create a schism between grassroot academics (those largely performing teaching duties); and those academics that have joined the administrative ranks and who largely perform administrative functions under the direction of management (especially those that have been appointed as directors by the vice-chancellor to lead the reform process) and the vice-chancellor.

Generally, there has been more willingness from governments to create autonomous governance bodies. Where this has not happened, there are

feelings that academics themselves have subverted the reform process. Increased participation of the private sector in the governance of universities is more evident though this has not been uniform in all the countries. Focus on alumni, including the Diaspora alumni as important stakeholders that can influence the governance and academic revival of the institutions is emerging as a strong governance reform. New funding of governance models, especially government-funded loan schemes could be critical to broadening the funding base and expansion of enrolments.

Some negative outcomes of the reforms noted from most cases can be seen in the trend towards diminished collegiality and faculty and student participation in constituting governance bodies. The emergence of new executive bodies, such as management boards and executive deans, have removed decision-making powers from faculty boards and university senates in crucial academic matters. The new governance systems have justified this on the basis of adopting fast decision-making, business-like practices as opposed to the wide and long consultation processes that traditional faculty-based systems entailed. Another development is the retreat to appointive practices as opposed to electoral processes in constituting faculty deans and heads of departments. Some university statutes now provide that under the college system, deans and heads of departments are appointed, reversing an earlier practice where these offices were occupied through a process of elections. Schools under the college system have become optional. The only required units are the departments. The principal of the college is the chief executive of the college and, as such, he or she is responsible for academic, administrative and financial affairs of the college. While this practice makes decision-making processes faster, it limits direct faculty participation in university governance and accords fewer premiums on academic merit in the constitution of various university governance bodies.

The reforms have also concentrated in the introduction of corporate systems to expand student enrolments especially at the undergraduate level, while failing to introduce changes or reforms in the area of epistemic governance and other critical knowledge production processes. Expanding undergraduate and postgraduate enrolments have taken place in the context of collapsing staff development systems. Quality assurance standards have focused on benchmarking the efficiency with which a lot more students are brought into the institutions and processed through than on core learning outcomes. In most of the universities, appointment requirements to various academic grades fluctuate based on criteria other than academic. Support systems to strengthen teaching and research has also been compromised. An increasing trend in this regard is the focus of the institutions to produce more PhD graduates as a response to university ranking criteria with little regard for the quality of

such PhDs. This trend will obviously hurt more efforts to revitalise higher education in the continent. Issues of quality at all levels, including academic appointments, have been the greatest causalities from the reforms. Since performance contracting, growth in post-graduate enrolments and throughput rates in PhD programmes have been included in university rankings and favourable appraisal of university management – emerging evidence from field data reveal that institutions are getting flexible on these benchmarks in ways that undermine quality academic programmes and research.

The reforms have not entirely reduced the tensions that over time undermined the effectiveness and efficiency of higher education institutions. Rather new zones of conflict limited to within the institutions have emerged. The manner in which these tensions are addressed and resolved, or remain unresolved, are major hindrances to moving the academic agenda of the institutions forward. Tensions have emerged between the faculty and university management over the sharing of dividends from the reform process – either through cash pay-outs or appointment to lucrative management positions within the universities. New containment strategies from university management to control the activities of staff and student unions abound as are divisions between faculty that support the new management trends in the universities and those that advocate for more focus on the academic mission and processes of the institutions.

Student Governance

Some of the case studies have focused on examining the existing frameworks that govern student academic and welfare conduct and student involvement – particularly, how this is changing and in what direction and the implications to the evolution of the institutions, especially in the context of increased setting up of private universities and privatisation of public ones. Data comparing trends in public and private institutions tends towards the conclusion that, the more the privatisation, the less the engagement of students in governance issues. Statutes exist that legalise and regulate the activities of student governance bodies. But such bodies do not seem to have any overriding power in the decisions taken by university organs such as senate and management. Data points to the lack of genuine student representation in governing bodies, especially with the increased privatisation of public universities. The reason for this, as the studies indicate, is that the governance reforms were partly a response to an era when student activism was seen as part of the problems affecting higher education institutions. Hence for the reforms, especially those related to user charges to succeed, the old political model of university leadership that provided much space for student input into the governance process had to be dismantled. The

studies however note positive aspects associated with the reform process such as universities strengthening institutions in charge of student welfare such as the student deanery and other welfare authorities.

A key avenue for student participation in university governance is student self-governance structures such as student councils and/or associations. Data from case studies show that besides student governments/councils/associations/ unions, a host of other organisations or structures for student self-governance have been allowed in most institutions. However both institutional meddling and external political influence in the affairs of the student organisations have distorted the focus of the organisations to non-academic engagements. Students are not questioning the quality of learning facilities or processes, and a majority of them do not feel represented. In one of the case institutions, 64 per cent of the students who responded to the questionnaire pointed out that they had never participated in the activities of student organisations because they did not seem to address their concerns. National politics and political parties have also returned to wield tremendous influence on student self-governance structures and processes. This is particularly so for students' government councils/ associations/ unions. A high proportion of respondents affirmed that all of the 11 possible areas of influence analysed by the study were greatly impacted on by national politics and political parties.

At the broad institutional level, diversity policies exist designed by the institutions to ensure that those elected to student governance councils represent the diversity of the student body in terms of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, nationality, study programme and year of study representation during elections. The studies show that, in principle, universities have developed diversity policies as part of governance reforms governing student representation in the governance process. However, the smaller proportion of respondents who agreed that election of student representatives to university governance structures caters for the diversity of the student body suggests that the observance of such a policy may be a bit of a challenge.

Impediments to effective student involvement in university governance also differ in public and private universities. Data suggests that in private universities, there is less zest for student involvement and student leadership does not have a direct linkage to management structure. Proxy representation is widespread and encouraged. Apathy among students also abound with poor attendance in meetings, indifference to governance process which makes it difficult for student leaders to gather issues from different students and to give feedback to the students, lack of adequate support systems and fear of victimisation of students leaders who become too vocal. In public universities,

impediments to effective student representation include large student numbers which makes it impossible to mobilise and represent everyone's needs, the diversity of students' views and needs which is too large to harmonise and represent effectively, compromised student leadership by university management and infiltration of leadership by national politics which often leads to the balkanisation of the student body by creating parallel camps.

Gender Aspects of Governance Transformations

Two studies examined how the changes in governance in the institutions are affecting the gender composition of members of the governing boards. In some cases, there is still continued domination of various governance boards by men – council, senate and academic boards. Interestingly, in all these governing bodies, women are virtually absent or lowly represented. It is from these bodies and committees that vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, principal officers and heads of establishments emerge. In some cases, national constitutions have made provisions for gender equity which is slowly transforming the gender composition of governance bodies. In both cases, trends towards embracing gender equity in the constitution of university governance bodies seems to be slow, sometimes resisted and the process determined not by the academic community but external forces to the university.

Summary: What Governance Reforms Provide Greater Promise to Revitalise HE institutions and their Academic Missions in Africa?

From the studies reported here, it is clear that governance reforms need to be more broad-based to involve faculty and staff in a manner that is more realistic. The best model of governance and institutional leadership is one that can deliver strong academic institutions that respond to local challenges. This has not been the case. While leadership has been innovative in seeking alternative funding strategies, intellectual accountability and output has been weak. Institutional level accountability from management is still weak. The councils for example may not have the capacity to provide oversight for academic processes, while the senate may be subdued by powers of management. Government residual powers in management still remain a threat to real governance autonomy, while faculty and students are more often overlooked on issues of policy and institutional governance even though they are important stakeholders. The private sector, though important, has not been given a real voice. Local philanthropic groups and individuals who often provide bursaries are not broadly engaged in university governance,

including curriculum design and delivery. Strengthening the oversight capacity of external oversight bodies to be able to resist unorthodox interference from the political establishment, especially in financial matters, accountability and appointment of institutional level leadership should be prioritised. Well-Managed staff development initiatives that do not lead to brain drain have the capacity to create internal academic governance oversight and provide a base for future institutional leadership. Well-functioning quality assurance systems at the institutional level, in a broad sense, can contribute to enhancing the academic standing of the institutions.

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Neoliberalism and the Changing Role of Universities in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Research and Development

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Abstract

With some specific examples from Kenyan universities, this article reviews the role of the post-independence African university in research and development, and the effect of neo-liberalism and funding on these activities. It was established that since their inception in the colonial era, the academic purpose of universities in Africa was essentially similar to that of universities the world over; to teach and advance knowledge by disinterested research and to maintain standards of teaching at a level which could be clearly related to those established in other countries. Following the achievement of independence, universities were designated as 'development universities', which meant, they were expected to undertake research and participate in the development of their respective countries. Most African universities tried in a variety of ways to further the idea of the development university, but due to inherent internal structures as well as the prevailing political climate, it failed to emerge as a 'development university.' However, such challenges to the development university did not diminish the central role of the African universities in research and development. African universities, as others the world over, are required to respond to a variety of needs and fulfil many aims, and this is not a matter of external demands, but of the multifaceted commitment rooted in the traditions of the universities themselves and of the academic profession. This article demonstrates that the neo-liberal ideology which required a significant withdrawal of the state in social provision through drastic reductions in social expenditure, which includes education, contributed to drastic reduction in

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public expenditure in higher education. This reduction in funding has had a far-reaching effect on the quantity and quality of research in most African universities. The virtual lack of research has serious implications on the role of the university which is characterised by disciplinary specialisation and basic research; which means public universities in Africa are increasingly losing out on their role as producers and disseminators of researched knowledge for the development of their countries.

Résumé

Avec quelques exemples précis tirés d'universités kenyanes, cet article passe en revue le rôle de l'université africaine post indépendance dans la recherche et le développement et l'effet du néo-libéralisme et le financement de ces activités. It a été établi que depuis leur création pendant l'ère coloniale, la mission académique des universités en Afrique était essentiellement celle des universités partout dans le monde ; enseigner et faire avancer la connaissance par une recherche désintéressée et maintenir des normes d'enseignement à un niveau qui pourrait clairement être mis en relation avec ceux établis dans d'autres pays. Suite à la réalisation des indépendances, les universités furent désignées sous le vocable « universités de développement », ce qui voulait dire, qu'il était attendu d'elles d'entreprendre la recherche et de participer au développement de leur pays respectif. La plupart des universités essayèrent de diverses manières d'amener plus loin l'idée de l'université de développement, mais du fait de structures internes inhérentes, ainsi que du climat politique prévalent, celle-ci manqua d'émerger en tant qu' « université de développement ». Cependant, de tels défis à l'université de développement ne réduisirent pas le rôle central des universités africaines dans la recherche et le développement. Il est demandé aux universités africaines, comme aux autres partout dans le monde, de répondre à une variété de besoins et de remplir beaucoup d'objectifs ; et ceci n'est une question de demande externe, mais l'engagement multidimensionnel enraciné dans les traditions des universités elles-mêmes et de la profession académique. Il est démontré que l'idéologie néolibérale qui exigeait un retrait significatif de l'Etat de l'offre social à travers des réductions drastiques des dépenses publiques dans l'enseignement supérieur. Cette réduction dans le financement a eu des effets profonds sur la quantité et la qualité de la recherche dans la plupart des universités africaines. Le manque de recherche virtuel a une sérieuse implication sur le rôle de l'université qui est caractérisé par la spécialisation disciplinaire et la recherche de base, ce qui veut dire que les universités en Afrique perdent de plus en plus sur leur rôle de producteurs et disséminateurs de connaissances de recherche pour le développement de leurs pays.

Introduction

The early African universities in both the Anglophone and Francophone Africa were designed to train the elite for leadership and to provide breadth and depth, rather than narrow professional training. However, the purpose of these universities was, essentially, that of universities the world over; to teach and advance knowledge by disinterested research and to maintain high standards of teaching at a level which could be clearly related to those universities established in other countries. Many of the universities were therefore established as small elite institutions for training high-class personnel. With independence, universities in Africa were perceived to have responsibilities which were in many ways different from those of the universities in Europe and North America on which they had been modelled, and an interpretation of these roles and related issues were expected to be characteristically different. Such universities and others which were established later were designated as 'development universities,' which meant, they were expected to undertake research and participate in the development of their respective countries. These expectations stressed the key responsibility of the university as one of serving its society in direct, immediate and practical ways that could lead to the improved well-being of the national populace (Burns 1965).

Although the development universities appeared to be the popular expectation of universities in Africa, leading African scholars highly questioned the capacity of universities to undertake the development role, especially since, structurally, virtually all of them were based on one or more Western models, the use of foreign languages as primary media of instruction as well as instructional materials, among others. In addition, while there had been some changes in curricula, they were still largely based on assumptions about knowledge from the North (Mazrui 1992). Despite such challenges, many of the universities in Africa tried in a variety of ways to further the idea of the development university. In varying degrees of imagination and conviction, they embarked on efforts to enhance the social relevance of what they were doing in many areas of study. However, research is showing that the neo-liberalisation ideology which favours free market economics and advocates for privatisation, marketisation and performance as well as the shift of the cost of higher education from the state to the individual is having a major effect on the traditional roles of universities and their management practices (Byaruhanga 2002). With some specific examples from Kenyan universities, this paper reviews the role of the post-independence African university in research and development and the effect of neo-liberalism and the funding on these activities.

Role of African Universities in Research and Development

As pointed out above, since their inception in the colonial era, the academic purpose of universities in Africa was essentially one of teaching and advancing knowledge by disinterested research and to maintain standards related to those established in other countries. It is in that context that the early university colleges in the Anglophone countries, except for Fourah Bay College, which was already associated with the University of Durham, the level to be reached in degree examinations had to be explicitly related to international standards through the special relationship established with the University of London. Nairobi, for example, was established in 1956 as the Royal Technical College in conjunction with that university. This arrangement which was based on collaboration between university colleges in Africa and foreign universities in syllabuses and examinations was expected to ensure that examinations and standards set at the degree level were those set in the foreign universities and led to the award of degrees of those universities (Watson and Furley 1978).

With the achievement of independence in the1960s, it however, became increasingly evident that African universities had social purposes deriving from the influences to which they owed their own existence. This was reflected in the universities' attitude towards education as a public service and their readiness to undertake extra-mural responsibilities in subjects of study or those special aspects which seemed peculiarly relevant to an African context or even in the levels at which courses could be offered such as lectures in African studies which were attended by all undergraduate students in some universities. Furthermore, a majority of the universities in Africa were essentially public institutions, created and maintained by national governments and planned to serve the needs of the nation rather than those of particular groups in the society. Unlike Western and American universities, African universities were expected to be instruments for change of the existing order, and not to preserve it. In some countries where they had been closely associated with the nation-building mission of the governments, universities were regarded with considerable affection as well as esteem (Coleman and Court 1993).

Among the early influences on the emergence of post-independence African universities' role was the Tananarive (Madagascar) Conference on the Development of Higher Education in Africa of September 1962, under the auspices of UNESCO and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa which played a complementary role to the Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in May 1961 and had placed priority on the expansion of higher education. The Tananarive Conference, in particular, addressed the role of higher education in the development of African countries in the context of cultural, social and

economic fields, noting that apart from teaching and research functions, higher education institutions had to assist in the building up of African nations as well as the unification of the continent. The Report stressed that in order to accomplish these tasks, African institutions of higher learning should not become 'ivory towers' detached from the society in which they are situated, but must contribute to national unity within the states they serve (UNESCO 1962)

Another important influence on the development of higher education in Africa, especially towards the achievement of independence was the Report of the Ashby Commission on post-secondary education, which emphasised that higher education was a national investment, and established links between high education and economic development. The report recommended substantial expansion of higher education systems and the specific introduction of manpower planning as the rationale behind African educational planning. This was in tandem with the national aspirations of newly independent nations, and the process of expansion was taken up on a large scale (Ashby 1965).

The exhortation that universities in developing countries in general and Africa in particular were to be demonstrably relevant for and totally committed to national development became so incessant and all-engulfing that it saturated all speeches, studies, debates, and discussion about these institutions. One of the most eloquent exhorters of the role of the African university was the former President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. In one of his speeches, he said:

> The University in a developing society must put the emphasis of its work on subjects of immediate environment to the nation in which it exists, and must be committed to the people of that nation and their humanistic goals…We in poor societies can only justify expenditure on a University- of any type-if it promotes real development of our people…The role of a University in a developing nation is to contribute; to give ideas, manpower, and service for the furthering of human equality, human dignity and human development (Nyerere 1966).

These perceptions in part gave rise to the notion of the 'Development University', in which universities were expected to undertake research and participate in development projects in the rural areas. The development university was widely held by a set of expectations concerning the distinctive and practical role in the task of national development. These expectations stressed the singular responsibility of the university for serving its society in direct, immediate and practical ways that could lead to the improved well-being of the national populace. Although universities were to continue improving the relevance of teaching and research and contribute to human resource development, their

role should however, go beyond these traditional functions to incorporate an expanded sense of social responsibility and policy relevance and to adopt new forms and purposes for their realisation. Universities were to take responsibility for such things as increasing food production, addressing poverty of rural populations, advising governments on house construction, as well as social engineering to improve ethnic balance and national integration. The new touchstones of university quality were its vocational and service contribution and its social commitment. To demonstrate the intricate relationship between the state and universities and the implications for national development, several governments attached the name of the nation-state to their universities, for example; the University of Malawi, University of Zambia, University of Sierra Leone and others (Puplampu 2005).

However, as Mazrui pointed out, the expectation that African universities should serve as major instruments of development in their societies by producing high-level human resource, relevant research and training appropriate skills and become potential innovators seemed to ignore some fundamental ethos and values underlying their foundation. For example, there were some elements of academic dependency on the northern institutions which were unmistakably clear. He pointed out that structurally, virtually all African universities in Sub-Saharan Africa were based on Western models and use Western languages as media of instruction. Relevant curricula, to a large extent, were still based on assumptions about knowledge copied from the North. While aspects of international subject matter could be embraced, specifically indigenous subject matter could only have very little place. In terms of materials, many universities relied overwhelmingly on books and materials published in the West, while student admission and staff recruitment continued to put a high premium on prior assimilation into Western culture (Mazrui 1992; Brown 1992).

Despite the heavily embedded Western foundation, African universities embarked on some efforts to fulfil their new role as 'development universities.' In East Africa, for example, following the establishment of the University College, Dar es Salaam, in 1962, the Federal University of East Africa was established in 1963, consisting of Makerere College in Uganda and the Royal Technical College, Nairobi. The expansion of the federal university was driven by the human resource development, with the rallying point being rapid growth in higher education, especially university education.

Like many other African universities, the University of Nairobi, the oldest in the country, tried in a variety of ways to further the idea of the development university. In varying degrees of imagination and conviction, it embarked on efforts to enhance the social relevance of what it was doing in areas such as an expanded role in extension work and community service, a considerable

contribution to national policy, an effective fulfilment to human resource and development, especially with regard to scientific and vocational careers, and enhancing of national integration. The independent government of Kenya, in particular, placed great emphasis on the expansion of higher education and geared it towards the manpower needs of the modern sector of economic life. Although, this particular task was expected of all tertiary institutions, the University of Nairobi, being at the apex of the education system at the time, had to play a major role in the development of the required human resource. It took the lead in the provision of qualified persons to man the burgeoning economic and administrative institutions as the oldest and largest university in the country.

Among the University of Nairobi's expected role was the development of outreach and extension activities or programmes. On the whole, such activities were not widespread although it embarked on increasing access to university education. Its College of Education and External Studies at Kikuyu launched a wide range of adult and further education programmes through its regional Extra-Mural Centres in the provincial towns of Mombasa, Kisumu, Kakamega, Nyeri, Embu and Nakuru and, lately, they have become colleges and campuses of the university.

Furthermore, to increase relevance and address among the main concern that university students graduate from the university, knowing practically nothing about the intricate political and social structures of their own communities, it established the Institute of African Studies to offer courses and programmes in culture and development. The promotion of African culture and related activities were not confined to the student body within the university, but included their responsibility for helping to promote a cultural awakening among the people or communities, a purpose which is served best by considerable expansion of the normal range of extension or outreach activities. Although this was a function which falls outside the university's customary responsibilities, a number of the university schools, faculties and departments/institutes have embarked on extension or outreach programmes with adult groups as a way of promoting a cultural awakening with communities and enhancing nation building as well as furthering their education through classes and study groups. In many cases, the target groups have included an effort directed towards the vast majority who live and work on the land as well as the slum dwellers in the urban areas (Sifuna and Sawamura 2010).

Despite such efforts, the University of Nairobi did not fully live up to the expectations and ideals of the development university, partly due to a number of factors. First, was the lack of training among the bulk of teaching force to teach development studies, followed by the inherent conservatism regard-

ing structural change and the functional overload because most of the new developmental functions had to be performed by the same academic staff as the traditional functions of teaching and research. Second, for a long time, there was a strong mistrust between the university and the national political leadership emanating from the notions of academic freedom and institutional autonomy which were hardly appreciated by the latter. The Kenyan regime's overriding concern for stability and its own survival at the time, heightened its inherent suspicion that the university was the main or potential source of hostile criticism and serious opposition. Such suspicion seemed to be increasingly confirmed by events of the time. There were widespread student and academic staff challenges to the regime during the late 1960s and 1970s which only strengthened its mistrust of the university as a base of opposition and discontent. This contributed to a greater questioning of the fundamental purpose of the university, and deeper penetration by the regimes into the vital areas of decision making previously within the realm of university autonomy. The prevailing climate of caution and fear coupled with the general belief that the regime had informants in most classes, prevented the emergence of a critical function of the University of Nairobi as 'development university' (Coleman and Court 1993).

However, such challenges to the concept of development university did not diminish the central role of the African universities in research and development. Much is expected of universities of the twenty-first century in all counties. African universities, like others the world over, are required to respond to a variety of needs and fulfil many at times incompatible aims, and this is not a matter of external demands, but of the multifaceted commitment rooted in the traditions of the universities themselves and of the academic profession (Smith 2007). An excellent example of how universities, especially in developing countries, find themselves pulling in all different directions came from a speech given by Thabo Mbeki, the then president of South Africa to the Association of Commonwealth Universities. The theme of his speech was the need for the revival of the African University to underpin the regeneration of Africa. It was noted that, 'Our entire continent remains at risk until the African university, in the context of a continental reawakening regains its soul. The new Africa can only be a product of the creative interface between the public, private and civil sector domains. At the centre of this interface is education' Smith (2007:31). It is further noted that the system of education is to furnish society with a steady stream of citizens of vision and commitment; it is not expected to be an enclave or an ivory tower whose curriculum has little relevance to the society in which it operates.

As an Indian Minister of Resource Development once noted, education, or more specifically, higher education, is the pathway to the empowerment of people and the development of nations. Knowledge generation has replaced ownership of capital assets and labour productivity as the source of growth and prosperity. Innovation is the mantra for development. This realisation is so pervasive that nations are scrambling to create institutions and organisations that would facilitate the process of knowledge creation. Knowledge creation requires a network of scholars actively engaged in its pursuit because the search for the unknown is a product of engaged minds, constantly challenging the known in an enabling environment. The modern university is the ideal space for the ecosystem of scholars to search for new ideas in a spirit of free inquiry (Sibal 2007). The positive contribution of tertiary education is increasingly recognised as not being limited to middle income and advanced countries, because it applies equally to low-income countries as it could help them become more globally competitive by developing a skilled, productive and flexible labour force and by creating, applying and spreading new ideas and technologies (Altbach and Salmi 2011).

A World Bank study on how to accelerate economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa spelt out the crucial contribution of tertiary education in supporting development. It observed that the key for success in a globalised world increasingly lies in how effectively a country can assimilate available knowledge and build comparative advantages in areas with higher growth prospects and how it can use technology to address the most pressing environmental challenges. Higher level institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa that are equipped to provide quality education and conduct relevant applied research can play a key role in producing workers with skills to assimilate technology and make effective decisions that help industry to diversify into a broader range of products. Good quality and relevant tertiary education is also key to stimulating innovations to produce new varieties and new materials and to develop sources of energy which can facilitate progress towards reducing poverty, achieving food security and improving health (World Bank 2008). Another World Bank study further noted that within the tertiary education system, research plays a critical role in training professionals, high-level specialists, scientists needed by the economy and generating new knowledge in support of the national innovation system (World Bank 2002).

Neo-liberalism and State Funding of Higher Education in Kenya

With regard to funding, during the era of 'the development university,' in Kenya as in other parts of Africa, the university was viewed as the key engine which powered African development, and hence, the levying of fees was perceived

as an unnecessary obstruction to that process. For many African governments, economic transformation of the continent was to follow from university education. As a result, after the achievement of independence in 1963, public higher education in Kenya has been free with public expenditure covering tuition and students' living allowances, development costs, instruction and research needs. The rationale for such state subsidies of higher education, especially tuition, was based on, among other things, on the country's desire to create highly trained personnel which could replace colonial administrators as well as ensure equity of access. It was reasoned that unless the state subsidised the high cost of higher education, many students would not be able to benefit from it, and therefore, the creation of highly qualified human resource would be seriously compromised. In this regard, from independence in 1963 to 1974 was the era of free higher education and its financing as part of public expenditure. In addition, the government met tuition fees and provided other allowances for students.

However, as from the mid-seventies, the Kenya government went ahead to introduce its first attempt at infusing cost into its public higher education through a student loan scheme which was rolled out in the 1974-75 academic year as part of the 1974-78 *Development Plan* (Republic of Kenya 1973). The loan scheme was introduced within the context of a free higher education, which was, however, coupled with increasing student numbers that rose from 571 in 1964 to 3,563 in 1973, and the economic difficulties the country has been experiencing since the early 1970s, caused partly by the rising oil prices in 1973. It was noted that the economy declined from a GDP growth rate of more than 8 per cent annually between 1963 and 1972 to 4 per cent annually in the following year. The student loan scheme was the first government's attempt to transfer the cost of higher education to students and their parents, although the loans were meant to only cover personal expenses such as accommodation, meals, textbooks and stationery, travelling and other effects; while the government continued to fully fund tuition and capitation. However, while higher education generally remained tuition free, the loan scheme heralded the advent of cost-sharing, not only in higher education, but in other sectors of education as well. The loan scheme was generously administered, as obtaining it was automatic. The socio-economic background of the applicant did not seem to matter much (Wangenge-Ouma and Nafukho 2011).

The Kenya government's shift in the funding policy in higher education seemed to coincide with extensive research findings on the contribution of education to economic growth, its costs and economic benefits (by level of education as a proxy for direct benefits), and rates of return. On the basis of such research as Woodhall points out that, 'the highest rates of return are

usually for primary education, followed by secondary education, with higher education apparently being the least profitable investment in terms of social return' (Woodhall 2003). Such a conclusion had far-reaching effects on some key international funding institutions. The World Bank, for example in its paper, 'Financing Education in Developing Countries', made some key recommendations, which included: recover the costs of higher education through user fees and reallocate these resources to the primary level; develop a credit market in higher education; and decentralise the management of schools and encourage private and community schools in order to increase competition and generate a demand-side push for better quality and efficiency.' The paper was emphatic that the funding arrangements at the time, contributed to a misallocation of resources devoted to education because higher education was the relatively less socially efficient (World Bank 1986). This position greatly contributed to the shift in donor priorities away from higher education to primary education, leading to more extensive cost-sharing in higher education, especially through the introduction of increases in tuitions and the use of student loans as opposed to grants and scholarships.

It was further reasoned that the argument that individual students or graduates should finance a greater share of the costs of higher education and that the share of the state should be reduced did not solely depend on the rate of return analysis. It is shown that many studies had concluded that high dependency on state funding were simply unsustainable considering the competing demands and the often declining budgetary expenditure in many African countries. In addition, there were also powerful equity arguments in favour of changing the balance between public and private finance, as participation in higher education was far much greater for children who came from upper income families, especially from urban areas who have access to high quality secondary education, than children from the poor, disadvantaged rural areas. It was noted that continued state financing was exacerbating inequalities (World Bank 1986).

In the World Bank's policy on education in Sub-Saharan Africa in particular made a number of recommendations which were supposed to improve both the internal and external efficiency of higher education in Africa. They included increasing student and staff ratios, expanding access for part-time fee-paying students, and assigning to non-public sources the full cost of housing, food and other welfare services provided to staff and students as well as expanding opportunities and improving quality by privatising institutions and functions. However, a more far-reaching recommendation was the one on cost-sharing or cost recovery. In particular, African governments were called upon to relieve the burden of public sources of financing higher education by increasing the participation of beneficiaries and their families (World Bank 1988). This paper

was key in setting a stage for major adjustments in public university education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Higher Education paper seemed to be a reinforcement of the previous paper, as it was noted that the extent of government involvement in higher education had far exceeded what was economically efficient as it had become a burden to the public finance. In this regard, countries were called upon to adopt policy reforms that could lower public costs to higher education which included cost-sharing and government withdrawal from meeting capital and recurrent expenditures (World Bank 1994).

In this regard, the Kenya government's shift in the financing of higher education since the early 1970s reflected the broad international thinking. It was in tandem with neo-liberal economic ideology which de-emphasised government intervention in the economy and a belief in progress through markets or deregulation rather than state control, liberalisation of trade and capital movement and privatisation of public enterprises and others. This was made quite explicit in the following statement:

> …the central thrust of the new policies is to rely on market forces to mobilize resources for growth and development with the role of the central government increasingly confined to providing an effective regulatory framework and essential public infrastructure and social services. The government will limit direct participation in many sectors and instead promote private sector activities (Kiamba 2004).

In emphasising privatisation and marketisation, the neo-liberal ideology requires a significant withdrawal of the state in social provision through drastic reductions in social expenditure.

At the same time, the World Bank pushed through the cost sharing policies in higher education, by which parents and students had to assume a portion of the costs of higher education in the early 1990s, following the granting of an emergency loan of US$ 55 million to finance public universities in Kenya (Nafukho 2004). With the usual characteristic of World Bank loans to poor countries, some conditionalities were attached to the loan, which included, the institution of new financing strategies for higher education. It actually made specific reference to cost-sharing. In this regard, the World Bank effectively prescribed reduced funding by government to the higher education sector and the introduction of cost-sharing. Which meant that due to the World Bank loan conditionalities as well as other related factors such as the poorly performing economy, and implementation of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), the Kenya government was literally forced to shift its education financing by reducing its expenditure to higher education. The government had therefore to

depart from its own previous form of cost-sharing initiated in 1974/75 which did not include the payment of university fees and introduced a direct form of university fee payment as part of the cost-sharing strategy beginning in the 1991/92 academic year. The new cost policy required parents and students to cover both tuition and student upkeep. This cost-sharing policy also witnessed the abolition of all personal allowances which students had been enjoying (Wangenge Ouma 2008).

It is important to also mention that before the World Bank demands to introduce a new cost-sharing policy, the Kenya government had been contemplating making changes in the financing of higher education, especially the discontinuation of tuition-free higher education. This was first signalled by the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 1986 on economic management which pointed out the need to put some tight limit on ministry expenditures which was expected to grow by less than 2 per cent a year of inflation through 1988-89. The paper particularly identified the ministries of education and health as targets for reduced recurrent expenditures (Republic of Kenya 1986). However, the government's Sessional Paper No. 6 of 1988, formally abolished tuition-free higher education several years ahead of new form of cost-sharing put in place in 1992 (Republic of Kenya, 1988) . It also needs to be pointed out that the change from free higher education to cost-sharing did not actually signal major financial responsibilities to parents and students. The cost-sharing seemed to go hand in hand with a heavy subsidisation of the system and low-level cost recovery. Heavy subsidies applied to all students admitted through the then Joint Admissions Board (JAB), which covered, among other things tuition and accommodation, irrespective of their ability to pay. Such subsidised students paid around US $229 as tuition fees irrespective of their programme of study. At the same time, while public universities began levying fees for extra services such as food and accommodation, the charges were below the market prices, which meant that the government still continued to subsidise these services heavily.

It needs to be pointed out, however, that as changes were being effected in the state funding in higher education, the insatiable demand for it in the country continued to grow as most public universities enrolled more and more students well beyond their capacities. The government did not seem to respond to the situation with increased funding, but instead embarked on a policy of financial cutbacks. For example, as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), public funding of higher education averaged 0.94 per cent between 1996 and 2000 and declined to 0.74 per cent from 2001 to 2005. For the individual public universities, in particular, this meant that for the University of Nairobi, the decline from 1998 to 2005 was from 70 to 39 per cent

while Kenyatta University declined from 67 to 50 per cent (Wangenge-Ouma 2008). As a result of the state's insufficient allocations, many of the public universities were in a state of financial crisis from the 1990s through 2000s. The type of cost-sharing implemented by the Kenya government which ensured minimal financial contribution by students seemed to exacerbate the crisis. Consequently, most of the public universities could not meet their financial obligations and continued to pile pressure on the government to increase its expenditure on higher education.

In response to the universities' persistent pressure for more funding, the government began admonishing them to turn to other sources to meet their costs such as learning and research as well as capital development expenditure. Through policy papers, the government exhorted public universities to seek more funding from markets and related sources. For example, in the Master Plan, 1997 to 2010, public universities were called upon to develop non-public sources of their revenues, including income-generating activities such as returns from research and consultancies with industries and employers, services to the community, agro-based production, manufacturing for the market, including making equipment for use in schools, hiring out university facilities; grants and donations from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and well-wishers; and funding from alumni associations. Hence, the government pointedly discouraged public universities from solely relying on public sources and the nominal fees they charged government-subsidised students (Wangenge-Ouma 2008).

Research Activities and Output

As already discussed, among the key roles of African universities was the need to develop and promote knowledge through teaching and research. In this regard, it was an important function of universities to analyse, interpret, and explain the prerequisite conditions which would enable a society to rise to a higher quality of life for all its members (Yesufu 1973). African systems and institutions have the crucial role of knowledge generation, synthesis, adaptation and application to ensure the advancement of the national interest on all fronts be they economic, social, cultural as well as political. Central to such knowledge systems are the universities and their research and advanced training programmes. Africa's universities continue to provide the bulk of their research and the training of virtually all key echelons of personnel. Admittedly, alternative sites for the generation and adaptation of knowledge are emerging and assuming prominence in public research institutes, private research centres, firm-based research units, regional and sub-regional centres, non-governmental organisations and so on. However, the trend is only begin-

ning and has yet to pose a serious threat to the dominance of the universities as the core of knowledge generation, reproduction and dissemination system in Africa. In this regard, the strength of African universities and their research institutions is a key condition for the continent's development (Sawyerr 2004). Hence, the formulation of appropriate policies and mobilisation of the necessary resources in the support of universities' research institutions has remained a key factor in development.

On the whole, since independence in the early sixties, most African universities have given a lot of prominence to research as a key function. Taking the example of the University of Nairobi, from the outset, it placed itself as an important centre of research by establishing some institutions which focused mainly on research. For instance, the Faculty of Education at Kenyatta University College, then a constituent college the university had the responsibility of training all undergraduate and post-graduate students in the country. One of its key departments was the Bureau of Educational Research which had the explicit task of conducting and promoting educational research. In addition, the bulk of academic staff in the university obtained their first degrees in the University of East Africa, with its constituent colleges at Makerere, Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, and followed with Masters and Doctoral work at a diverse array of schools and departments abroad as well as at Nairobi.

It was, however, noted that while the university at the beginning encouraged research as a means of effecting change and demonstrating its relevance in the development of the country, the measure of its support for research through financial resources was generally weak. Although the University of Nairobi provided a number of staff establishment positions for the research institutions like the Bureau of Educational Research and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), it provided very modest funds for research itself. For example, by the late seventies the funds in the research vote ostensibly earmarked for allocation by the Deans' Research Committee were absorbed into the general running of a financially stricken institution. In the face of expanding enrolments and soaring costs, university administrators inevitably gave priority to teaching rather than research needs (Court 1983). Of course, the problem of financial resourcing was not entirely that of the university, but of the government. While the importance of research was very much emphasised in official pronouncements and echoed in the official documents like the Development Plans, the practice was quite contrary to the official rhetoric. Hence, the university was not allocated adequate funds for its key activities. The position of the university progressively got worse both in material and goodwill termsfrom 1982 following the failed coup d'etat of August of that year which students and many academics seemed to welcome (Nkinyangi 1981).

When faced with budgetary problems and the reordering of priorities, therefore, the university administrators made research grants the first casualties whether already allocated or not. From the early 1980s, the finance officer froze the Deans' Research Grants to members of staff. This action virtually halted research production by members of the academic staff. At the Institute of Development Studies, the university's main centre for the conduct of social science research and one of the leading institutions in this particular area in Africa, serious research production by individual scholars or by the centre came to a complete standstill, giving way instead to consultancies and short-term contract research (Nkinyangi 1983). The research situation at Nairobi was further exacerbated by continued budgetary cutbacks throughout the 1990s, during which research virtually ceased being an important component of the institutions, except for a few projects largely funded by donor agencies.

Hence, Kenya, like many other African countries, ceded the strategic area of research under pressure from the international financial institutions, donor community and its weak economic situation. The deteriorating economic conditions combined with international donor agencies policy bias against public financing of higher education, seriously contributed to the under-sourcing of research. The underfunding of these institutions has continued since 1990s. Public or private resources devoted to research and research capacity building have remained inadequate in Kenya, just like in many other African universities. For example, the Association of African Universities (AAU) study found that by 1993-1994, none of the responding universities spent up to 4 per cent of their recurrent budgets on research; research funding generally ranged between 0.33 and 3.78 per cent. Even then, much of the research was funded through donor grants (Sawyerr 2004).Closely related to funding of research activities is the provision research infrastructure, such as laboratories, equipment, libraries, and an effective system of information storage retrieval and utilisation. These include, appropriate management systems and policies which facilitate and support research enterprise, including incentives that recognise and reward high calibre research.

At the same time, it is interesting to note that the provision of more revenue through parallel programmes in some universities, especially in Kenya, has ignited an infrastructure construction boom in some of the public universities which had stalled since the 8-4-4 construction project in the 1980s due to public funding cutbacks, especially for capital development. Kenyatta University for example, has constructed a 5-storey post-modern library, a new administration block, a graduate school centre, among other facilities using internally generated resources, while Nairobi University is constructing a multi-storey plaza using similar resources as well as some external support in addition to

purchasing some properties for academic use in Nairobi. The two universities have also used additional revenues to undertake repairs and maintenance of physical facilities which generally were quite dilapidated as a result of underfunding by the exchequer. They also now look much neater and better maintained than a few years back, but little finding has been tailored towards research. However, they continue to face some serious challenges with regard to the provision of equipment and specialised teaching and learning resources due to very high student enrolments.

Among other key challenges of the research enterprise in African universities is the management of postgraduate programmes. On the whole, there are serious weaknesses in postgraduate programmes of most African universities which strongly limits institutional research capacity and development. While there is a general lack of relevant data which makes it difficult to confirm the actual numbers of postgraduate students in the various universities, the Association of African Universities mentioned above found out that, in the early 1990s, the proportion of graduate students out of the total enrolment at the responding institutions was between 7 and 1 per cent at a Francophone university with enrolment exceeding 40,000 students (Shabani 1996). At the University of Nairobi for example, postgraduate research also became a casualty of government financial cutbacks in higher education. In the early 1980s, both the government and university suspended funding postgraduate students. The government also followed by scrapping scholarships for graduate studies. The main effect of these decisions was to change the nature of the postgraduate programmes in the revenue earning faculties and schools. The withdrawal of state funding of postgraduate education left only two alternatives for faculties and schools which wanted to initiate them. They were either to turn to donor support to continue with research-based postgraduate programmes or launch course work-based postgraduate degrees which required no research and could be funded on the basis of tuition from fee-paying students. The general trend has been that only a few strategic departments and units can secure donor funding to continue with research-based postgraduate programmes. However, most faculties and schools opted for non-research postgraduate programmes. The non-research programmes are intended to meet the market demands.

In addition, the increasing number of postgraduate students poses a major challenge of supervision given the limited number of qualified staff. The poor state of postgraduate programmes is a reflection of their underfunding as well as poor research content. The graduate stipend was withdrawn in most institutions, and where it is still provided, it is not enough to support full-time study, while the job market, to a large extent, does not adequately reward advanced study. Apart from the failure to ensure the training of adequate teaching staff,

the inadequate numbers of graduate students at any one time in any institution implies not only the absence the natural foot soldiers of any research enterprise, but also a severe shortage of potential teaching assistants required to help the release of more of the time for senior faculty staff for undertaking research (Sawyerr 2004).

However, while the University of Nairobi and other public universities in Kenya have put in place research policy documents which places considerable emphasis on the role of research for development and established units for coordination of research work as well as establishing the office of the deputy vice-chancellor in charge of research innovation and outreach, what seems unclear from such research policies is how resources will be mobilised to implement them as continued reliance on the government makes such lofty plans a pipe dream. Although these universities are commended for making efforts to generate funds for research locally, the funding has generally remained inadequate in comparison to their expenditure on infrastructure development. The University of Nairobi, for example, was recently reported to have raised around 8 billion Kenya Shillings for research in the last ten years and has undertaken a good number of research projects with the help of donor funding. Part of the key research challenges is not only the non-availability of resources, but also the lack of the research culture among the academic staff (*Daily Nation* 2015). A vice-chancellor is on record to have observed that despite the considerable amount of ongoing research at the University of Nairobi, most academic staff seem to view research largely as a vehicle for upward mobility on the academic ladder. Consequently, often after one has been promoted to the level of full professor, there appears to be reduced interest in research and publications due to lack of incentive for it (University of Nairobi 2012).

As Munene and Otieno have pointed out, Kenyan universities' shift towards low-cost high-demand teaching programmes puts at risk a fundamental role of universities in knowledge production through a culture of quality research. This is a serious threat to the reputation of these institutions. This is because as the demand for twining academic programmes to the labour market's immediate requirements increases and as government subsidies to public universities continue to dwindle, the temptation to expand this type of knowledge production will continue to be irresistible. The implication of this is that the country's public universities will be failing increasingly in fulfilling their role as producers and disseminators of research knowledge. This is because budgetary allocations for research both internally and externally have declined considerably and undertaking research is no longer considered to be a key function in the operations of public universities in the country (Munene and Otieno 2008).

Summary and Conclusion

With some specific examples from Kenyan universities, this paper has reviewed the role of the post-independence African university in research and development and the effect of neo-liberalism and the funding on these activities. It was established that since their inception in the colonial era, the academic purpose of universities in Africa has remained essentially the same with other universities the world over, namely, to teach and advance knowledge by disinterested research and to maintain standards of teaching at a level which could be clearly related to those established in other countries. Following the achievement of independence, universities were designated as 'development universities,' which meant, they were expected to undertake research and participate in the development of their respective countries. These expectations stressed the key responsibility of the university as an institution serving its society in direct, immediate and practical ways that could lead to the improved well-being of the people. Most African universities tried in a variety of ways to fulfil this notion of the development university. However, due to inherent internal structures as well as the prevailing political climate, they failed to emerge as 'development universities.'

However, such challenges to the development university did not did not totally eradicate the central role of the African universities in research and development. Much is expected of universities of the twenty-first century in all countries. African universities, like others all over the world, are required to respond to a variety of needs and fulfil sometimes incompatible objectives; and this is not a matter of external demands, but of a multifaceted commitment, rooted in the traditions of the universities themselves and of the academic profession. The paper further demonstrates that the neo-liberal ideology was responsible for the significant withdrawal of the state in social provision through drastic reductions in social expenditure including the funding of education. This has contributed to a drastic reduction in public expenditure in higher education. The reduction in funding has had a far-reaching effect on the quantity and quality of research in most African universities. This virtual lack of research has a serious implication on the role of the university. It means that public universities in Africa are increasingly losing out on their role as producers and disseminators of researched knowledge for the development of their countries.

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Quality Assurance in Ethiopian Higher Education: Boon or Bandwagon in Light of Quality Improvement?

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Abstract

Quality assurance has become a global issue crossing the cultural contexts of many higher education systems. However, questions still remain whether this notion underpins deeper quality improvement in instructional practice and student learning outcomes. In Africa, where there are rapidly growing and diversified higher education systems, the need to assure quality through external examiners, audits, subject reviews or benchmarking is evident, but it is not clear if quality and standards of education are improved as a consequence. This study examines whether the process and contents of quality assurance constitute a substantial means by which Ethiopian higher learning institutions improve the quality of teaching and learning. It also outlines the consequences of quality assurance and its associated factors. The study employed an evaluative case study that draws on a critical (emancipatory) paradigm of evaluation and reflective judgement, viewing through Perellon's (2007) conceptual framework. Results suggest the presence of some misalignment and inherent methodological flaws; and these have brought only partial benefits, and some unintended ill-effects. The root causes of these results, as illustrated in this article, are that there is a lack of primary focus and holistic thinking in a sense to effect deeper improvement, and a likelihood of hopping on a quality assurance bandwagon. This article offers a perspective on what must be done to bridge the prevailing gaps in quality assurance functions, and build a culture of quality to improve current practices.

Key words: Bandwagon effect; Ethiopia; higher education; quality assurance; quality improvement.

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Résumé

L'assurance qualité est devenue une question mondiale qui traverse les contextes culturels de beaucoup de systèmes d'enseignement supérieur ? Cependant, des questions subsistent encore sur le fait, ou non, que cette notion est le fondement de l'augmentation d'une plus grande qualité dans les pratiques d'instruction et l'apprentissage des étudiants. Le besoin d'assurer la qualité à travers des examinateurs externes, des audits, des revues de sujets ou l'étalonnage est évident, mais il n'est pas clair que la qualité et les normes de l'éducation soient améliorées comme conséquence. Cette étude examine si, oui ou non, le processus et les contenus de l'assurance qualité constituent un moyen significatif par lequel les institutions d'enseignement supérieur éthiopiennes améliorent la qualité de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage. Elle met aussi en lumière les conséquences de l'assurance qualité et ses facteurs associés. L'étude a utilisé une étude de cas évaluative qui s'inspire d'un paradigme essentiel (émancipatoire) de l'évaluation et du jugement réflexif, partant du cadre conceptuel de Perellon (2007). Les résultats suggèrent la présence d'un certain décalage et de lacunes méthodologiques inhérentes ; et ceux-ci non amené que des bénéfices partiels et des effets négatifs inattendus. Les causes profondes de ces résultats, telles qu'illustrées dans cet article, sont qu'il existe une absence d'un objectif essentiel et une pensée holistique allant dans le sens d'effectuer des améliorations plus profonde et un gagne-pain à sauter dans le train de l'effet de foule de l'assurance qualité. Cet article offre une perspective sur ce qui doit être fait pour combler le fossé prévalent en termes de fonctions d'assurance qualité et construire une culture de la qualité pour améliorer les pratiques actuelles.

Mots clés: effet de foule; Ethiopie; enseignement supérieur; assurance qualité ; amélioration de la qualité.

Quality Assurance in Higher Education: The Global Perspectives

Higher education in the twenty-first century has to cope with many inevitable challenges that emanate from economic globalisation, neo-liberal accountability, advancement in information communication technology (ICT), socio-political transformations, and so on (Marginson 2007). Additionally, it should be well-equipped to respond to local circumstances, and be able to create new opportunities by playing the key role for the growth and advancement of society (Hussey and Smith 2010).

Solutions to these tripartite pressures are sought through similar patterns of reform in the different national contexts, with possible variation in the responses which can be attributed to national and local circumstances (Perellon 2005). Research conducted across nine countries, including France, the

United States, South Africa, Indonesia, Israel, Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Vietnam, indicates that a common set of action repertories, as well as, distinctive national and institutional contexts, have played key roles in responding to these pressures (Goastellec 2008).

Over the years, the widening of higher education has become compelling internationally (Altbach 2008). This global trend is partly embedded within a broader reshuffling of the entire higher education sector under the international diffusion of ideas like standardisation, outcome-based education and consequential accountability movements. While universities favourably accept the importance of change at the local level, this has not resulted in widespread change, in classroom practice (D'Andrea and Gosling 2005; Nelson and Robinson 2006). The issue of reform is tending more towards organisational restructuring rather than salient features of instruction, following similar patterns of reform in other jurisdictions.

Quality assurance has emerged as a management tool to prevent quality problems that have been most immediate and pressing to higher education, and this has impacted upon the higher education system of every continent (Ewell 2010; Harvey and Newton 2007). However, it is not evident whether current quality assurance initiatives have created a more conducive and supportive higher education sector as there is disagreement over their motivation, value and implications (Amaral and Magalhaes 2004; Mhlanga 2008; Skolnik 2010; Westerheijden et al. 2007). For example, there exists a motivational paradox between assessment for quality assurance and assessment for quality improvement, and this represents conflicting interest and a divergent focus (Borden 2010). Furthermore, quality assurance relates to 'broader organisational change processes than those more specifically related to teaching and learning' (Stensaker 2008: 10). Moreover, evidence of its effect on student learning remains obscure internationally (Filippakou and Tapper 2008; Hodson and Thomas 2003; Kristensen 2010; Taousanidis and Antoniadou 2010).

Quality assurance received warm acceptance by enthusiastic policy makers and education bureaucrats due to its attractiveness to governments with increasing interests in accountability (Stensaker 2008). However, it has been strongly resisted by academics and students who have experienced alienation under its influence as less concern for their perspectives is shown (Anderson 2006; Gvaramadze 2008; Harvey 2005; Rosa et al. 2012) with empirical evidence suggesting the political non-neutrality of quality assurance (Skolnik 2010; Westerheijden 2007). Furthermore, supporting evidence emerged from Africa that criticised the political fuzziness of assurance (Khelfaoui 2009), and its ramifications for higher education institutions operational procedures and academic practices (Mhlanga 2008; Shawa 2008).

While there have been a number of criticisms of the quality assurance approaches in higher education, internationally (see Law 2010: 362-363 for a summary), its essence remains at the core of ongoing attention to accountability of institutions of higher education. For the Western nations, this has often been interpreted as a concern to maintain economic dominance through the pursuit of high calibre working forces (Westerheijden 2007). However, developing countries have sought this through the intervention of international forces such as the World Bank. These forces are targeted on the importation of policies, which mirror the higher education system of Western countries (Collins and Rhoads 2008; Lim 2001).

Quality Assurance in African Higher Education Context

Today, quality assurance is becoming an integral part of Africa's higher education systems as governments, in some parts of Africa, have shown their concerns and commitment to its establishment and operation (Hayward 2010; Materu 2007). The adoption of quality assurance in Africa seems a replication of the 'Bologna Process' (Khelfaoui 2009; Mhlanga 2008; Shawa 2008), reflecting 'symbolic adaptation' (Schwarz and Westerheijden 2004) or a metaphor of 'policy borrowing' or 'transfer' in education (Phillips 2005; Turbin 2001). For example, the conceptual understanding of quality as 'fitness for purpose' is similar almost everywhere. There are shared similarities in objectives, approaches to quality assurance procedures, how the different data collection tools are employed, and the nature of the outcomes (Materu 2007).

However, there are distinct features added to the adopted quality assurance scheme. For example, South Africa uses 'fitness for transformational purpose' type of conceptualisation (Luckett 2005), which is the result of integrating quality assurance with the country's dire need to influence economic and social transformation. A further paradigm shift is underway in South Africa to establish a culture of collecting national evidence of quality through a promising area of emphasis: student engagement (Matthew et al. 2012; Strydom et al. 2012). Elsewhere, in Nigeria and Ethiopia, a national university ranking process, as one of their yearly activities, was incorporated into their higher education system's core business (Materu 2007; Tadesse et al. 2012). This ranking exercise seems a positive influence when it is seen at the surface. However, as the concern of those higher education institutions' leaders has increased, its long-term detrimental impact upon the higher education quality culture becomes real, internationally (Bookstein et al. 2010; Harvey 2008; Marginson and van der Wende 2006; Tambi et al. 2008; Usher and Savino 2007).

Other differences are the result of the socio-political circumstances prevalent in the various parts of Africa. For example, the lack of facilities

and outmoded curricula are prominent quality issues in African universities, and a further imbalance between core values of higher education and the profound influence of managerialism (Ntshoe 2004; Teferra and Altbach 2003). Research shows that the quality assurance systems in Africa are operating in a hostile environment where governments are insisting on increased access and demanding quality outputs while, at the same time, interfering in university governance (Hayward 2006). Under these circumstances, it is difficult to maintain autonomy, regarded as essential for creativity and learning (Materu 2007; Mhlanga 2008). This untenable situation has led to uncertainty about how to accommodate these pressures without compromising the academic purposes of higher education institutions' (Khelfaoui 2009; Strydom and Strydom 2004) and to further implementation constraints (Shawa 2008).

The Ethiopian Higher Education Context

In Ethiopia, there is a rapid expansion of the higher education system since the mid-1990s. This expansion entails increasing access to higher education and a widening of participants through extension, summer, and private programmes (Yizengaw 2007). Expansion fuelled the proliferation of new regional universities to counterbalance the centralisation of higher education institutions around the capital, Addis Ababa (Goastellec 2008). In the 2011/12 academic year, the higher education sector hosted a total of 494,110 students in the regular and continuing and distance programmes, both in government and non-government institutions (Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Education 2012). While the proportion of women students accounted for 28.2 percent of the total student enrolment, the private sector accommodated for 37.1 percent of same. Despite these rapid expansions, Ethiopia's Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) is 5.2 percent. This appears huge for the country compared to institutional capabilities, yet it is still minimal compared with the 7 percent Gross Enrolment Rate within the continent of Africa, and a 26 percent average rate worldwide (UNESCO 2009). Thus, to level with these, Ethiopia needs to increase the extent of expansion within the country, at the same time, improving the quality of the higher education system.

In Ethiopia, the role of higher education as a backbone of the country's development effort to eradicate poverty is given a central position and part of the vision is concerned with improving the quality and employability of university graduates (Federal Ministry of Education 2010). It is definitely true that quality assurance is important for achieving the development goal of the higher education system, thereby contributing to the attainment of the country's central agenda (Ashcroft 2004).

The History of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Ethiopia

One of the most important reforms that offers a legal basis for the rapid expansion of the higher education, and the establishment of a quality assurance system in the country is the proclamation number 351/2003 (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2003). Following this proclamation, a national agency was established in 2003. A couple of pilot external quality assessments were conducted in one private college and one governmental university, in the 2005 academic year. Later on, a large-scale quality audit was conducted in the then relatively older nine government universities. As well, the higher education proclamation number 650/2009 has given directions to the higher education sector in the country by formulating improved policy and mandating structural changes (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2009).

Following the establishment of a national higher education relevance and quality agency, much has been said about the need to create a culture of evidence in the Ethiopian higher education institutions from which would flow better data and greater institutional accountability. While the Ethiopian public universities, responding to the national agency's calls, have begun such development those assessment efforts to date have mostly been transactional and have brought little systemic change. Due to this and other problems, there are emerging research reports that justify the challenges of exercising quality assurance (Ashcroft and Rayner 2010; Ashcroft and Rayner 2011; Nega 2012; Semela 2011; Teshome and Kebede 2010). Regardless of these, the existing reality in the higher education institutions is complicated by problems of resourcing and a shortage of realistic quality parameters (Tadesse et al. 2012; Zerihun 2006). Research reveals existing deficits in relation to these complications and proposes strong recommendations to change (Asefa 2008; Cantrell 2010; Nega 2012; Zerihun et al. 2012), but so far there is no supporting evidence about the actualisation of such recommendations being implemented.

This study was designed to examine whether the process and contents of quality assurance constitute a substantial means by which Ethiopian higher learning institutions improve the quality of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the study was intended to outline the consequences of quality assurance; and explore its associated factors. While addressing these, the study offers a distinct and different perspective on evaluation, and this can yield important insights for researchers and practitioners of higher education concerning the relationship between quality assurance and improvement. An in-depth study of the selected case (quality assurance policy) provides administrators, teachers, students, and policy makers with some information that will help them to understand the quality assurance policy initiative from a broader perspective and judge the merit or worth of this initiative in the light of quality improve-

ment. While the emphasis is on the Ethiopian higher education context, this study may make an important contribution for those practitioners and decision makers working in other cultural contexts.

Methodology

Research Design

This article employs a case study method, particularly *evaluative case study* that represents the incorporation of critical (emancipatory) paradigm and reflective judgement into the evaluation process (Melrose 1998). While 'the case itself is regarded as sufficient interest to merit investigation' (Stenhouse 1988: 49), the policy domains are considered central issues of concern. The study illustrates how an evaluative case study might have helped to conduct evaluation, reaching beyond immediate concerns of traditionally understood rational functionalist tradition that focuses on immediate implications and privileges a managerial dimension (Melrose 1998). Such an evaluation does bring into focus fundamental questions relating to quality assurance leading to a more meaningful evaluation that, in the end, provides more significant and useful findings.

Data Sources

In this study, the case to be evaluated is the quality assurance policy of the Ethiopian higher education system expressed in two institutions: the national higher education relevance and quality agency and one public university. While most of the evidence have been generated from the electronic copies of quality assurance policies, this was supported by additional information obtained through the researcher experience working in the Ethiopian higher education system, and informal conversations made with some students and teachers working in one public university in Ethiopia during the 2011-12 academic year. Thus, by its nature, the study is neither purely empirical nor purely interpretive (Creswell 1998). These are important characteristics to warrant the version of case study considered here to be both theoretically justifiable and practically desirable as well (Stenhouse 1988).

Conceptual Definitions

This article adapted D'Andrea's (2007) interpretations of the macro and micro levels. Accordingly, the macro level refers to national/institutional higher education policies that affect tertiary institutions. The micro level, or individual level, refers to the local practice at the smallest level of the organisational unit of the higher education community in relation to the teaching/learning processes, including curriculum planning, the interaction between the teachers and students, among other things.

The concepts 'boon' and 'bandwagon effect' need explicit descriptions of their meanings as intended in this article. This article conceptualises boon as possible benefit sought from quality assurance pertaining to the higher education system operations. However, advantage may be relative, so this study considers the possible positive influences it has brought in assumptions, beliefs and practices. Thus, benefits include success stories and improved situations as a result of engagement in quality assurance. The concept of bandwagon effect represents a group thinking process grounded in a social dynamic to reveal a tendency to follow the actions or beliefs of others (Colman 2003). The concept of bandwagon effect equates to the essence of policy borrowing and policy transfer in education (Phillips and Ochs 2003), as well as, external rationalisation (Schwarz and Westerheijden 2004).

Conceptual Framework of Analysis and Interpretations

In this study, quality assurance is approached as a policy domain, reviewing policies that are formulated and implemented in Ethiopian higher education. To further understand the nature of quality assurance, the researcher incorporated, into the critical analysis, a quality assurance analysis framework (Perellon 2007) and a conceptual lens of bandwagon effect (Colman 2003). The analysis and interpretations of quality assurance, in this form, would help to identify areas that should be maintained, and what improvements would help to maximise benefits and find better ways to alleviate problems. This helps to establish a solution-focused approach to quality problems instead of focusing on retrospective problem diagnosis (Brown 1992). Moreover, it provides alternative vantage points from which to evaluate the potency of quality assurance to promote the improvement of quality.

The interpretivist nature of the study means that the researcher is bound up in the studied higher education setting, rather than being a detached, objective observer. The data from the analysis of quality assurance policy were instrumental in the establishment of the discussion topics or questions, as presented in this article. Through the analytic process, the perspective of the researcher is balanced with the domain analysis, lived experiences, and literature – so that the truth is more likely to emerge when all these perspectives are synthesised. Indeed, this proved important in ensuring that the assumptions made were not solely the result of the researcher's subjective interpretation, but also grounded by actual data and a review of relevant literature.

This study used Perellon's (2007) quality assurance framework to chart the essential elements of quality assurance policy. One of the distinguishing characteristics of Perellon's framework is domain analysis based on substantive contents across five dimensions. These dimensions include objective,

control, focus areas, procedures, and use. Perellon's framework was found appropriate for this study since this provides a platform to critically analyse quality assurance as this assists in the exploration of the processes involved in 'cross-national attraction' and its likely consequences (Philips & Ochs 2003). Perellon's (2007) five dimensions are defined as the following:

- *Objectives* refer to the intended targets of quality assurance representing desired outcomes,
- *Control* refers to the authorised people in the higher education community who are responsible for monitoring the process of quality assurance,
- *Areas* denote the major components involved in the quality assurance practices,
- *Procedures* imply the setup of the quality assurance arrangements.
- *Uses* refer to the scope of utilising the information collected or data sources.

The policy development process, as Darling-Hammond elaborated in her article 'Policy and Change: Getting beyond Bureaucracy', is evolutionary, and it extends through 'the basic ways in which policy is conceived, developed and put into practice'(Darling-Hammond 2005: 362). Cognizant of this fact, this study focused on specific issues of quality assurance, including the process, contents, consequences and associated factors.

Critical Policy Analysis and Evaluation

The Ethiopian Higher Education Quality Assurance Policy

This study approaches quality assurance as a policy domain. Here the adopted national quality assurance policy of Ethiopia (Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency 2006a; Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency 2006b; Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency 2006c), and the corresponding policy of one of the universities (Jimma University 2011a) are presented using Perellon's (2007) five dimensions.

The National Quality Assurance Policy of Ethiopia

Objectives

The agency's espoused mission is 'to ensure a high quality and relevant higher education system in Ethiopia.' *Its* operational objectives include:

- Assessing the relevance and quality of higher education;
- Ensuring that the curriculum supports the country's development needs;
- Providing an efficient and transparent accreditation system; and
- Disseminating information regarding standards and programmes.

Control

In Ethiopia, quality assurance is operated by a national quality assurance agency. In the document, exploring this dimension, higher education institutions are the owners with the national quality assurance agency being mandated to work independently.

Areas

Major components: Accreditation, audit, and curriculum harmonisation.

Main activities include developing quality assurance guidelines and procedures, and promoting stakeholders awareness and participation.

Focus areas: There are 10 focus areas for internal and external quality assurance.

1. Vision, Mission and Educational Goals
2. Governance and Management System
3. Infrastructure and Learning Resources
4. Academic and Support Staff
5. Student Admission and Support Services
6. Programme Relevance and Curriculum
7. Teaching, Learning and Assessment
8. Student Progression and Graduate Outcomes
9. Research and Outreach Activities
10. Internal Quality Assurance

Procedures

Three-step procedures, including institutional self-evaluation, external audit, and peer-evaluation are the norms. There are also, quantitative performance indicators and scoring procedures.

Uses

Predominantly used for reporting strengths and weaknesses of the institutions and accountability to ministers. The institutions are autonomous in deciding whether to disseminate findings to the public or not.

The Quality Assurance Policy of a University in Ethiopia

Objectives

Although it was not directly written under the title of objectives, there are descriptions of statements typifying the purposes of quality assurance scheme institutionally. The statements are to:

- Ensure periodic discussion of the processes of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Provide orientation on remedial programmes.
- Facilitate discussion with students and academic staff on matters related to academic remedial programme.
- Assist in departments/colleges and other academic bodies in the development of standards.
- Assist in establishing central examination data base. Sample exam for each course will be collected at the end of each semester.
- Oversee the functioning of examination committee and team charters' activities at the department level.
- Assist in developing policies and instruments for quality assurance of academic programmes.

Control

Though they are still under establishment, at the institution level, there are quality assurance office structures across the different colleges and these offices are mandated to monitor and assure quality with a centrally coordinating office of Academic Programme and Quality Assurance (APQA).

Areas

There are three main areas of concern for the internal quality assurance policy:

a. Academic remedial actions for undergraduate students who scored less than 55 percent of a set of continuous assessment activities.
b. Affirmative action tutorial programme for female students.
c. Academic remedial actions based on Department/School recommendation.

The main activities include the following:

- Developing quality assurance guidelines and procedures,
- Promoting stakeholders awareness and participation,

- Actively involving in university and college level internal and external quality assessment/audit activities,
- Assisting in the development and review of examination policies and ensure their proper implementation, and
- Proposing the improvement plan based on quality assessment results.

Procedures

There are three-step procedures, beginning with Department-level review of performance, followed by College-level review, and finally, institutional review. There are also quantitative performance indicators and scoring procedures.

Uses

At the institution level, there is reporting of reviews and reports to the department heads, college deans and to the central APQA office, when applicable. The review reports are also used for further planning for improvement.

Critical Issues of Quality Assurance

While globalisation is the prime impetus for borrowing quality assurance policies and practices between countries, the major problem lies on the background theory, and the emphasis placed on structural and institutional factors (Law 2010). Although the underlying theory has not been explicitly stated, the notion of quality assurance relates to the theory of the learning organisation, which addresses the macro level of analysis and sees change as a function of policy mandating and corresponding changes in organisational routines, values and practices.

The reviewed quality assurance policy of the Ethiopian higher education has elements that boasts technical soundness to fairly execute quality assurance functions. The first is that emphasis on quality assurance helped Ethiopian higher education institutions to become more concerned with external requirements, and this potentially provides initial impetus to start discussing issues of quality. This has had a profound influence on the way in which the entire higher education sector has invested their resources to shape up the direction of their quality focus. This has been supported in the literature as quality assurance exercise given its initial positive outcome in the development of quality culture (Harvey and Stensaker 2008; Trowler 2005).

Yet, there are still some blurred areas both nationally and institutionally that need further clarity when seen from the perspective of quality improvement. For example, aspects of the assurance purposes focus on areas and standards. As presented in the previous section, the agency's stated objectives are a

means, not ends. While the end is to bring lasting change, for example, in the quality of the graduates' competencies, 'assessing quality' and 'disseminating information' represent the means. Guided by this, a university also mistakes the means for an end, as it is dealing with, for example, 'ensuring the existence of discussions and reviews' rather than targeting 'its effects'.

Moreover, Ethiopian quality assurance also applies measures of teaching inputs such as 'infrastructure, learning resources, and academic and support staff,' as indicators of quality. This is educationally inappropriate as it lacks paying attention to the actual achievement of students resulting from these teaching inputs (Maher 2004). The same policy document states student progression and graduation outcomes as indicators of student achievement. In practice, these are performance indicators (Kis 2005) and tell very little about the learning experiences and students success rates (Coates 2005; Pascarella 2001). Thus, a more realistic and genuine measure of the value of higher education than a measure of teaching input and institutional performance is highly desirable.

Furthermore, the standards seem blurred. Green (1994) states: 'Standard is a basis for measurement, or a yardstick – a neutral term to describe a required characteristic of a product or service' (p.13). In the sense of quality assurance, it means that the standard should be the norms, expectations and specifications adopted (Harvey and Newton 2004). From this view, the current descriptions of the ten focus areas are merely *labels* described as a list of areas for evaluation. Likewise, there is no specific description about standards in the quality assurance policy of the studied institution. To endow these with substance, the standards should outline the generic principles that should be in place rather than just specifying the focus areas. Thus, new standards need to be prepared with clear descriptions of specific items such as standards of competence, service standards, and organisational standards. In this regard, the government, as *owner,* has stipulated the structure and principles of expected standards for the higher education (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2009). The Ethiopian higher education strategic centre has given detailed descriptions of the graduate competencies (Higher Education Strategy Centre 2012). However, the government has consistently broken the principles when it comes to expansion (Ashcroft and Rayner 2011). There is a critical need for the agency to strongly work towards ensuring the fulfilment of minimum thresholds at every higher education institution, and institutional assurance bodies need to do the same in every college.

The other critical point is the national agency's operations as well as the location of quality assurance organs institutionally. Nationally, the assignment of the agency's executive has been made on the basis of bureaucratic rationality

rather than professional authority, thus quality is controlled by a government appointed agency, thereby ensuring that the body lacks independence. This is similar to the situation in other African countries (Materu 2007). Likewise, the assumed position of the quality assurance body within a university does not empower those working in quality assurance and quality care to be independent as budget and operations are dependent on the decisions of high ranking officials, with activities and decisions being subject to the serious scrutiny of this order. This creates favourable conditions for powerful influence of managerial rationality (Barnett 2003). This arrangement compromises their potential influence for safeguarding quality.

Factors Leading to Quality Assurance in Ethiopian Higher Education System

In the Ethiopian higher education system, the adoption of quality assurance and the decision to establish the national quality assurance agency, and similar institution-based quality assurance bodies occurred under the influence of several forces, both internal, that is, from the higher education institutions, and from unforeseen external influences as well. One of the internal influences was the long-held tradition of a nominal quality assessment practice routinely exercised for the purpose of fairly fulfilling accountability requirements and staff promotion. These evaluative processes were, however, powerless to influence improvement and innovativeness (Zerihun et al. 2012).

Another problem was the higher education institutions failure to acknowledge individual and bottom-up quality improvement initiatives, and inability to make use of research results, and the need to exercise institutional autonomy on academic matters (Bekele et al. 2010; Jimma University 2008). The other important influence in creating a bottleneck is the government's excessive interest in accountability and its centralised control and top-down, linear adoption model (Areaya 2010).

Moreover, the quality assurance process was conducted at the same time as the entire higher education landscape was being re-structured through a process termed 'Business Process Re-engineering' (BPR). This poor timing meant that there was much uncertainty in the system with restructuring taking precedence over quality assurance. On top of this, the donors who granted funding and foreign advisors were also influential in determining how events played out (Ashcroft and Rayner 2010). These external push factors are more indirect. The main sources of external influence were the following:

- The World Bank, which used to offer advice and low-cost funding,

- The United Kingdom, through assigning experienced academics to assist in the national quality assurance agency, and
- The Netherlands funding projects that were mainly run through Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Moreover, issues of quality are not dealt with impartially as they are under the influences of different stakeholders and this has created external ownership leading to compliance, but with some achievements and consequences.

What Does Quality Assurance Bring to Ethiopian Higher Education?

The Boon of Quality Assurance

In the Ethiopian higher education, current efforts via quality assurance have offered some benefits in terms of initiating the test for quality via creating awareness on the need to establish quality assurance, and increasing the use of quality assessment structures and processes. Moreover, the establishment of a national quality assurance agency was followed by a series of developments, including programme specifications (with a focus on graduate profiles and mechanisms of quality assurance), and institutional self-evaluation, and external quality audit. Likewise, there were trial collaborative projects to establish a qualification framework for higher education with the help of experts from South African Universities. Also, there has been an increased attention to subject benchmarking at the national level that is followed by a number of consultative workshops to raise awareness and share experiences.

The other benefits are generated from the national quality assurance agency's continual effort to provide training support and wider disseminations of the external quality audit experiences and updating current developments via the national agency newsletters. These are good sources of enrichment (Teshome and Kebede 2010). It is critically important to think of other constructs that may provide more fertile sources of supplementation to these efforts.

Within the universities, there are some emerging developments in terms of preparing and using academic quality assurance guidelines. The concerned APQA office has given special attention to some relevant quality assurance themes, for example, remedial actions for academically low performing students, affirmative action for female students, and remedial action based on Department/School special recommendation.

The Bandwagon Effects of Quality Assurance

Inaccurate Focus

There are foreseeable undesirable outcomes from a quality assurance initiative. However, it is too strong to say that outcomes have been the results of only quality assurance, since other compounding factors such as rapid expansion, similar reform initiatives, and the lack of baseline data have exacerbated situations. One of the major consequences of quality assurance was the development of policies and guidelines that are more concerned with regulations and steering of procedures instead of real concerns for learning and change. Also structural organisational changes are apparent. These outcomes are evident in other higher education systems as well (Mhlanga 2008; Westerheijden 2007), implying that quality assurance, in effect, is meant for broader organisational change and accountability mechanisms (Ewell 2009; Harvey 2005; Stensaker 2008).

A cursory look into the adoption process and the duplication of orientations and actions in the quality assurance exercises lead to the assertion that a culture of conformity and adherence to the national reform policies and guidelines is growing in Ethiopian higher education. Also apparent is a shift in focus with the mobilising of resources to fit with external requirements, for example, recent efforts to conduct the tracer study and join the modularisation model (Higher Education Strategy Centre 2012; Jimma University 2011b).

Moreover, there is a changed role for academic developers now consumed by quality assessment and assurance requirements rather than a real commitment to quality care as they engage with their routine activities (Tadesse et al. 2012). This outcome was one of the fears expressed by Cantrell (2010) and has unfortunately become realised. Thus the pursuit of quality assurance has led to inefficient practices and distracted the institution's attention away from more essential activities.

Changed Assumptions and Beliefs

It seems that a new belief system acknowledging the centrality of student satisfaction as opposed to student's productivity has come into play. Also scepticism is apparent as the academic staff members have complained extensively about over prescriptive teaching and assessment policies and managerial control over their class attendance, particularly at the beginning of a semester. Currently, there is increasing pressure to embark on achieving modularisation and Balanced Score Card (BSC) as part of the neo-liberal accountability agenda (Higher Education Strategy Centre 2012). There is a tendency of switching from teaching students to delivering modules (Hussey and Smith 2010). While the advantages of BSC model over traditional forms

of performance measuring tools and its institutional implications are very clear (Kassahun 2011), this contributes more as government regulation and steering tool (Harvey and Newton 2007), mainly used to promote bureaucratisation as opposed to quality improvement (Barnett 2003).

In spite of these facts, the new initiatives have created further burdens for Ethiopian university academics. In response to the changed culture, the academic staff members are complaining that their lives are now governed by a quality audit culture rather than one based on trust and respect. This audit culture has potential negative implications for the future of the academic profession, with the possibility that the decline in quality teaching and learning will intensify.

Can Assurance Helps Quality Improvement?

Quality assurance, as it is currently interpreted in the Ethiopian higher education context, is much focused on the structural and institutional factors rather than the educational practices and student learning experiences. As a result, the information provided by a quality assurance approach is primarily useful to measure higher education institution and system progress, but of more limited utility for instructional guidance. It is argued here that quality assurance is a relatively weak intervention to ameliorate the quality because, while it reveals shortcomings, it does not contain the guidance and expertise to inform responses.

Regardless of this, there are persuasive arguments in favour of quality assurance as it promotes both accountability and improvement, at the same time (Teshome and Kebede 2010), and this has impacted the entire higher education system. Scholars argue that, rather than being directed at the essential elements of quality improvement, and to the pressing academic and practical problems, quality assurance places much emphasis on how the quality assurance is to be accomplished (Harvey and Williams 2010; Huisman and Westerheijden 2010; Schwarz and Westerheijden 2004). This is so because quality assurance, seen from its adoption process in Ethiopia, appears to be based on transfer theory of learning, which does not recognise the complexity and contextual nature of educational change (Squire et al. 2003).

Also, the Ethiopian higher education context is not the same as that found in Europe or elsewhere (Goastellec 2008). Conditions for Ethiopian academics are likely to be more burdensome (Assefa 2008; Nega 2012; Tadesse et al. 2012; Teferra and Altbach 2003). However, there has been remarkably little discussion of appropriate strategies for shifting thinking and practices at the micro or individual level. In short, by imposing criteria and looking for evidence of conformance to processes and procedures, as the Ethiopian higher

education system is aggressively pursuing, the illness in higher education academe related to improving and sustaining quality teaching and learning is being effectively ignored.

Moreover, quality problems can be partly caused by the values and assumptions that underpin different aspects of pedagogy and assessment (Haggis 2006; Hayward 2010). Indeed, a rigorous study to understand the different factors influencing the realities for academics and students is desperately needed. More importantly, there is a need for proper quality measurement that is valid, contextualised, and closely linked to an improvement plan and execution (Harvey 2005) because improvement requires moving forward through action (Rosa et al. 2012).

However, in the current form, the institutions are distracted from the real work of quality improvement by the emerging domestic annual ranking of universities, which is the quality assurance showcase of the Ethiopian higher education system, positively deceiving institutions into thinking that they are performing well. Seen critically, this may be risky as it may contribute to many institutions of the country becoming complacent, leading to a resumption of the business-as-usual mindset. Moreover, the emerging national ranking of universities seems a futile exercise as it has been complicated with the use of quantitative indicators, institutional annual reporting at times of heightened accountability and a major weakness in measuring what matters most for the students learning. Of course, measuring quality is not as simple as *bean counting,* and it is not also a matter of *counting everything,* as quality is more complex and some variables are more powerful in influencing students learning than others (Coates 2005; Kuh et al. 2006; Tam 2007). This hierarchy needs to be recognised and acted upon.

According to Yorke's (1998) recommendations, a higher education system can be treated as a complex set of levels, with the macro levels (e.g. the institution or programme) being more responsible for the accountability aspects of educational quality, and the micro levels (e.g. individual) more responsible for the enhancement aspects (Yorke 1998). As we move from the macro levels towards the micro, the quality indicators of importance change significantly, and become more related to the individual. In this multi-level system, quality indicator data should be evaluated and acted on at the lowest level possible, and higher levels are expected to audit whether the data have been obtained and acted on properly. By way of establishing such a multi-level quality system, and strengthening the relationships between them, it is possible to maintain the validity of evidence, prevent methodological flaws, and assist in proper planning and execution of evidence-based quality improvement (Trowler et al. 2005).

Implications

First, there needs to be better and more explicit thinking about the points, values, and levels at which the quality assurance policies and their implementation strategies are being addressed, and the gaps in policies and strategies oriented to the micro level in particular need to be worked out. Second, the theories of change which underpin the quality assurance policies directed at enhancing teaching and learning in higher education need to be made explicit. An appropriate theoretical approach might be social practice theory (Engstrom and Danielson 2006; Wenger 1998). By virtue of establishing the basis of quality assurance with a social practice theory of change, it is possible to address the micro level, at the same time, accommodating the different dimensions of change such as the social, affective, psychological and cognitive aspects (Trowler et al. 2005).

As a result of engagement in a quality improvement process associated with major tasks, participants will be involved in the social construction of reality, at least in the areas of commonly shared practices that they have. It is through this process that initiatives for the enhancement of teaching and learning will, then, be switched from a focus on the structural and institutional factors to the practical and sociocultural domains. A deeper improvement of quality is a long-term affair that requires a willingness of everyone in the institution to change to a culture of quality, which is improvement-led, research informed, and evidence based. Matru (2007: 123) expresses this point perfectly when he said, 'institutions are owners of quality and a culture of quality is most relevant'.

However, initiatives require the delegation of responsibility for quality and standards down to the individual level where innovation, responsiveness and trust can play out (Sahlberg and Hargreaves 2011). This is the main challenge for those working on quality assurance to expand and further their roles. On balance, it needs to pay special attention on proper diagnosis, empowerment, and building a culture of cooperation.

Conclusion

This study has discussed quality assurance in higher education from a broader perspective and presented a policy analysis and reflective review of quality assurance in the Ethiopian higher education context. The main purpose here is to examine some of the central benefits and drawbacks of adopting this approach in the light of quality improvement. It is argued here that there are three fundamental problems underlying the quality assurance towards enhancing teaching and learning in the Ethiopian higher education system. First, the initiatives are underpinned by a policy mandate and an inadequate tacit theory

of change. Second, although the initiatives are supposed to address different levels of analysis in the higher education system, they do so in a partial and fractured way, compounded by methodological, empirical, and measurement weaknesses. For example, quality assurance policies both at the national and institution levels focus on input, quality assurance processes, and institutional performance. Third, these initiatives were influenced by a number of forces (internal & external) that exist in a situation indicative of inconsistencies (Trowler et al. 2005). These may undermine their effects. In short, there are indications that the initiatives lack a *holistic thinking* to effect deeper improvement; it reflects a possibility of hopping on a quality assurance bandwagon, not based on its merits, but based on what others do.

This study argues that the issues of quality assurance that have received so much attention over the years with regard to teaching and learning are unsound in precisely addressing the forces limiting the effectiveness of the higher education sector. This is mainly because the notion that a precise instrument for measuring what we are doing educationally is the answer to a failing system is surely simplistic and erroneous (Sahlberg 2007). The result is that wherever poor outcomes exist, they have been hidden by the excessive concentration on processes of accountability and self-assessment, and by a complacency that arises because good processes are easier to achieve than good outcomes (Mahsood 2012). Rather, due recognition of the complex nature of teaching and learning and a profound understanding of how students learn is required, if progress is to be made in raising standards and quality in the higher education sector. Thus, authorising quality assurance alone will not influence the changes that are necessary to make a qualitative difference to the Higher Education experience in Ethiopia. The current outstanding effort by South African higher education system that is shifting focus to student engagement is exemplary in contextualising issues of quality closer to the pedagogic practices, and the students learning experiences (Strydom et al. 2012).

Of course, there is a serious quality problem in the Ethiopian higher education academe. What the higher education sector most urgently needs, however, is painstaking attention to its real deficiencies. Getting on the quality assurance bandwagon is merely imitative of a Western solution based on external rationalisation (Khelfaoui 2009; Obasi and Olutayo 2011). Although the arguments presented in this article are partly theoretical, the conclusion can also yield an empirical hypothesis, amenable to practical investigation.

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