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Colour-line: The Petrification of Racialization and Alterity at the University of Stellenbosch

Fazil Moradi*

Abstract

This paper investigates ‘black’ (minority) student experiences and living conditions at an Afrikaans-speaking historically white university, the University of Stellenbosch (SU). It is an empirical attempt to unearth the present conditionality of minority students that make up 14 per cent of the enrolled students at SU. Thus it involves social (under-)development and is a move away from the individual as unit of analysis per se and includes assessment of the social processes that condition a racialized dividing-line between different groups and at once prolong group affiliation/belonging. The main focus is on the following themes essential to the dispute on educational transformation in South Africa: racialized skin colour and stereotypes, access to language and education, and segregated spaces and economic reality. I apply qualitative research interview and utilize the post-colonial approach to argue that minority students constantly encounter the reinstatement of a racialized system of difference that excludes and positions them as marginalized subjects. It is argued that these experiences are due to the corporeal schema and cultural characteristics that delineate membership at SU, which make minority students more resistant and at once more ambivalent about the pursuit of education as a self-realization process, and more importantly an investment for future life, which constitute the main force for almost all of the minority students.

Résumé

Cet article étudie l’expérience des étudiants « noirs » (minoritaires) dans une université de langue afrikaans historiquement « blanche » : l’Université de Stellenbosch (SU). C’est un essai empirique consistant à mettre en évidence les conditions de vie actuelles des étudiants minoritaires qui représentent 14

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pour cent des effectifs de SU. Il inclut l'évaluation des processus sociaux qui conditionnent une ligne de partage racialisée entre les différents groupes et prolonge en même temps l'affiliation à un groupe d'appartenance. L'accent est mis sur les thèmes suivants, relatifs au débat sur la transformation de l'éducation en Afrique du Sud : la couleur de peau et les stéréotypes raciaux, l'accès à la langue et à l'éducation, les espaces ségrégationnistes et la réalité économique. La démarche des entrevues de recherche qualitative et l'utilisation de l'approche postcoloniale cherchent à montrer que les étudiants des minorités rencontrent constamment le retour d'un système raciste de différenciation qui les exclut et les considère comme des sujets marginalisés. Cet article soutient que ces expériences sont dues au schéma corporel et aux caractéristiques culturelles qui définissent l'appartenance à SU ; ce qui rend les étudiants minoritaires plus résistants mais plus ambivalents quant à la poursuite de l'éducation en tant que processus d'autoréalisation.

Introduction

The remarkable co-existence of the stirring but imaginary appeal to the lost 'past', and the invariable struggle to re-install the unimaginable past in the present is not wholly impossible at the University of Stellenbosch (SU). The apartheid government took the racializ(ing)ed colonial discourse to be self-evident, and that every 'race' is endowed with fundamentally different capabilities. In this vein, education under the auspices of apartheid not only racially segregated South Africans but systematically implanted an already naturalized discourse of insurmountable differences among races (Clark & Worger 2004). The intense reciprocal relationship between educational institutions and the apartheid state's primordialistic notion of national and cultural identity policies constituted and perpetuated the racializ(ing)ed system, which only encouraged obedience and relentless inequality. Hence, the apartheid educational system wilfully reproduced South Africans as irremediably different from each other and especially from the 'purity' of the white-washed Afrikaner. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the Extension of the Universities Act of 1959 uncompromisingly required racialized social groups to attend not only segregated and exclusive but strictly controlled campuses in the Bantustans, ('black African homelands') (Alexander 1989: chap. 1; Dubow 1995; Murphy 1992). The so-called Bantu education kept the racialized South Africans' aspirations within acceptable limits, and fabricated different races, cultures, linguistic communities, and thus assembled a doxa of the same (Molteno 1984; Rich 1990).

According to Lalu (2007:58), the institutional taxonomy and essentialism, which is rather a taboo in academic culture in South Africa today, still persist: 'the taxonomic ordering of universities in South Africa remains blinded in its role in producing racialised subjects'. The education allegedly started to disintegrate as an apartheid dominion since the occurrence of a radical alarming

emergency; the dawn of a student-based 'Black Consciousness Movement' shed a strong light on the deliberate (symbolic) violence of these racialized colleges. Essentialism, i.e., Afrikaner superiority and subjugation of the rest, enjoyed the status of an axiom. It was declared that the main philosophy of these colleges was the implantation of docility and the preservation of racial socialization, which only served the power position of the newly born Afrikaner (Biko 1978; Mmusi 1987; Ranug 1986). Such radical awareness and/or movement fundamentally disturbed the roots of the imposed and embraced axiom. Nevertheless, the 'political turn' (transformation from apartheid to de(racialization) segregation) involves essential transformations in the politics of representation of the South Africans and emphasizes an open and democratic society based on 'human dignity, equality and freedom' (Chap. 2, Bill of Rights; see also Ministry of Education 2002:13). Yet the turn, which has inevitably paved the way for the black subjects to enter the historically Afrikanerized SU, remains an inconvenient reality that disturbs the institutional settings of SU, and therefore it is produced as only an aphorism unwarranted of respect.

Thus, the primary aim of this article is restricted to the assessment of the present living conditions and experiences of 'black' students (henceforth referred to as minority students) from South Africa enrolled at SU. Although the majority of the so-called students of 'colour', which constitute another minority group, equally share the broader inequalities and racial discrimination and conditionality, they are still privileged in terms of language (Afrikaans) and other social activities. In fact, students of 'colour' make up the interface between the 'white' and the 'black' colour, but there is a desire within the group, which is to be seen and identified with the white colour since it is made the ideal that every student should aspire to. Yet, the existing conditions of the black students differ in ways that I will reveal in this text, which is to unearth the continuity of racialization and naturalized racial apartness at SU. The engaging effort is not a black-non-black dichotomy, but a matter of empirical emphasis and/or ethics to unravel the inevitable impacts of the division embedded in the educational labour which remains entangled and structured by the racialized/coloured institutional settings of SU. Moreover, I will attempt to disaggregate several essential dimensions of the manner in which the reassertion and redeployment of the racial practices of the 'past' and the educational difficulties are being negotiated by minority students, enrolled at SU due to the 'access' afforded by the re-configuration of educational and social programmes. A combination of semi-structured interviews and a post-colonial approach are applied to examine the following question: How do minority students negotiate experiences of imposed marginality, racialization, and racial exclusion and segregation at a historically White (Afrikaans) university, the University of Stellenbosch?

The Setting: The Historical and Present Context of SU

In his inaugural lecture in 2002, Chris Brink (2007:135), former vice chancellor of SU, stated that the history of SU '[s]hould be considered by anybody trying to understand' it. Indeed, the role of history and historiographical assumptions are significant in order to approach certain (dis)continuities of the present state of SU. The institution was formally founded in Stellenbosch as an independent university in 1918 and it was developed to protect the 'purity' of Afrikaners through a policy of complete separation. Brink contends that it thus became the place where Afrikaans 'turned from a local patois into a language of literature and science' (2006:1). It is almost the only educational institution that produced both the architects of apartheid and their marginalized antagonists. The wilful architects were, among others, Daniel François Malan (1874-1959), the first apartheid prime minister (PM); Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd (1901-1966), professor of Sociology and Social Work and later a leading PM of apartheid; Balthazar Johannes Vorster (1915-1983) PM of apartheid and later Chancellor of the SU; Pieter Willem Botha (1916-2006) Chancellor of SU, PM, and later President of the apartheid government. Brink indicates that rectors of the SU 'were, typically, prominent members of the Afrikaner Broederbond' (2006:1-2): a covert organization associated to the National Party from 1948 through 1990 (Jemison 2004; O'Meara 1983:64). Daniel François Malan claimed Stellenbosch as a place from which 'the Afrikaner *volk* can best realise its ideals and exercise the largest influence ... Stellenbosch therefore stands for an idea' (cited in Brink 2006:20). Thus, the 'idea' implied to essentialize and conflate the political, national, cultural, religious and the racialized skin colour into one homogenized unit.

Webb and Kriel (2000:39-40) assert that 'In nationalist apartheid thinking the Herderian equation explicitly included race: race (skin colour) + language = nation/volk'. In addition, the Calvinist doctrine of election was also produced as supportive of 'the spiritual, biological, and cultural superiority of the "elect" Afrikaner culture' (Jemison 2004: 80). Balthazar Johannes Vorster (1966-1978) assertively declared that, '[W]e as Whites in South Africa have a special duty towards the whole of Africa ... We are the only White people that are of Africa. I make bold to say: no-one understands that soul of Africa better than we do' (cited in Barber & Barratt 1990:143). I contend that the primordialistic cultural and racial belonging that formed the colonial era and apartheid governmentality in particular is still an enduring dilemma in the country in general and at SU in particular (see Alexander 2001:471, 2004, ff; Berger 2003; Huschka & Mau 2006; Freund & Padayachee 1998). According to Johann Rossouw, SU as the main territory of apartheid cannot dispel its apartheid commitment as an outdated and outmoded doctrine. He lucidly describes SU, which is plainly relevant, as a space where autocracy and patriarchy are central

elements of organization and order, which hold the post-apartheid discourse of human rights and freedom and multiculturalism at bay (2006).

In its current context, SU is expected to provide students with their educational interest independent of social and cultural backgrounds. The composition of student corps of the year 2008, that continue to be measured according to race (skin color), were 68 per cent 'white', 16 per cent 'coloured', 13 per cent 'black', and roughly two per cent 'Indian' students (SU Annual Report 2008). In the SU Annual Report of 2010, which emphasize SU as the 'creator of hope', the composition is still measured according to colour, the student corps being 67 per cent white, 14 per cent black, 16 per cent coloured, and two per cent Indian. In the 2008 report it is also clearly indicated that SU should be 'significantly different and significantly better', and be a 'home for all' of the enrolled students. It is worth noting that none of the reports include faculty members, which according to my observation is a way to avoid criticism, since among the Humanities and Art and Social Sciences the department of Sociology and Social Anthropology appeared as the only department that had employed a Christian-oriented 'black' lecturer, who has now become a devoted priest. It has also offered the well-known scholar Achille Mbembe a position; this has been rather translated as a matter of appearance and SU reputation and academic status in the continent. Overall, the ten faculties of the SU continue to be completely dominated by the so-called whites and with some positions reserved for the so-called coloureds. However, the established ethos of SU, qua racialization and deliberate structural classification and control, is desperately taken as the best means of governing and shaping the enrolled students and not least the faculty members. In other words, the ethos has become the main rationale, which does not seem to signify an immediate rupture from the unsettled teleological template of the alleged past, to which minority students must adhere if they desire a 'better' future.

Method

Participants

Nine months of the academic year of 2008 at SU were designed for observing, communicating, (re-)interviewing, and participating with the minority students as they attempted to establish an 'African Students' Association' to facilitate and protect their rights and further their educational interest. Attending and sitting with the students in class, observing their numerical and spatial distribution inside lecture halls, listening to their demands and communication with the teachers, playing football and having lunch with them, attending organized events such as their respective congregations in townships constituted my first-hand data. Participants included eight (four females and four males) undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD students from different faculties (natural

science, social sciences and law) and linguistic communities. The focus on the participants' shared experiences in the light of Frantz Fanon's analysis of the colonial discourse and practice and other post-colonial theorists allow for an appealing assessment that would otherwise remain veiled. The participants' selected pseudonyms will be applied to protect their personal identity.

Theoretical Framework

The persistence of the already racialized skin colour and stereotypes and the educational configuration at SU reflects the continuation of the colonial discourse formidably analyzed by post-colonial scholars, in particular Frantz Fanon. The urgency of Fanon's analysis of the corporeal differences is a valid way to make sense of the inevitability of the racialized condition at SU. Nonetheless, the age of neo-liberal globalization and the prevailing technology control, and mobility (Appadurai 1996; Bauman 1998) does not appear to indicate any fundamental change as racialization, racial exclusion, and discrimination remain pertinent. The power relations have but been reshaped and/or appropriated by relentless currents of the 'post-modern' age. Edward Said notes that the post-modern technology has only reinforced the colonial racialized stereotypes and the already-existing frontiers (cited in Bhabha 2004:66). It is such a continuity of manufactured knowledge and/or social action and behaviour, where one group deliberately intends by means of their actions to impose their own doxa on another group that constitutes the focal point of this paper.

Fanon's observations overtly bring forth the racialized skin colour and associated stereotypes: 'Dirty Nigger!', or simply 'Look! A Negro!' (2008:89). His multifaceted historical-geographical perspective on everyday racism unravels a controlled and self-regulating system of 'Manichaeian division' (Fanon 2006:24). Such a regulatory system constantly reminded the 'black' man of being naturally different and thus s/he was clearly informed about their designated position, as Fanon (2008:17) put it, 'You, stay where you are'. Fanon indefatigably stresses that the burden of the Africans has been that of the fixed skin colour. Black skin colour signifies visibility of a marker of difference and subordination: 'I am a slave not to the "idea" others have of me, but to my appearance... I am fixed' (Ibid 95). During the fifteenth to the twentieth century, physical composition – skin colour, eye, nose, lip and body shape, hair texture – culture and religion were constructed and produced as natural markers of racial difference that overlapped in structural taxonomies (see Eze 1997). The French *Encyclopédie* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* have dogmatically stressed black skin colour as the sign of an '[u]nhappy race: idleness, treachery... cruelty... stealing... profanity... debauchery... They [Africans] are strangers to every sentiment of compassion, and are an awful example of the corruption of man when left to himself' (Eze 1997:94).

The fabrication of the incommensurability of races, cultures and spatiality based upon the social and natural sciences and literary configurations (Fanon 1965:121 ff; Said 1993) constituted the prevailing 'racialized regime of representation' (Hall 1999:257) and/or a naturalized regime of truth about 'Other/self'. The established corporeal schema mechanically takes the rigid function of colonial stereotypes as a field of identification that delegates the African to a different world and species: 'the black man... has no culture, no civilization and no "long historical past"' (Fanon 2008:17). Therefore skin colour is seen as an [ID]entification marker par excellence, that essentializes and reveals the overall characteristic intrinsic to the Africans. Moreover, it renders a distant geography associated with not only different but an inferior 'race'.

Said (2003:54) maintains that 'imaginative geographies' were constructions that turned distance into difference through a series of spatializations. They served to reduce/homogenize and demarcate 'the Other/the same': i.e., calibrating a gap between the two by 'designating in one's mind a familiar space of "theirs" and a strange space of "ours"' (Ibid.). Said's analyses unpack the stereotypes, objectification, and colonial assumptions that are inherent in the representations of an imagined Other/self. His central idea is that knowledge about the Other/self is generated through imagined constructs that stereotypically set up the Other against the self.

Consequently, the 'Black Subject' was mummified and manufactured as the antithesis of the civilized, since 'the white world is the only decent one' (Fanon 2008:94). Such appropriated differentiations justified the hostility and pillaging and at once fostered a sense of distinctive self/Other ID(entity). Language has been essential in such a colonial formation: 'All colonized people ... position themselves in relation to the civilizing language: i.e. the metropolitan culture'. Language has also been essential in the assemblage of narratives that repeatedly reproduced the Manichaeian compartments of the colonial interstice. What is emphasized in such systematic and violent process of enunciations is the skin colour that independent of the language ability and the command of cultural codes of conduct was articulated to function as an 'essentializing tag'. For example, the great philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1997[1775]:37) did not doubt such conjured/fixed definition of Other/self: 'This fellow was quite *black*... a clear proof that what he said was stupid' (emphasis added).

Bhabha notes, that '[a]n important feature of the colonial discourse is its contingency on the concept of "fixity" in the ideological construction of otherness' (2004:95). Such disentanglement permits one to discern the distinguishing features with regard to violence that marked the idea of the 'West' and the 'Rest' (Hall et al. 2004:184 ff). Hall reiterates the notion of the West as (id)entity and the most advanced type of society linked with the embalming of the 'Rest' (Ibid.). Nevertheless, he charts that racial and negative stereotyping

as a historical and social/political construct has characterized Western representations of Africans for centuries (Hall et al. 2004; see also Doh 2009:47 ff.). The stereotype produces discriminatory and phantasmatic knowledge, and is the sign of and dependent on the presence of difference, which is also its main objective. This indicates that stereotype, while a historical myth, as an identification marker frames and represents an interface between the Other/self. In following Fanon, Bhabha argues that skin colour constituted a 'signifier of discrimination' and as such it was constantly accentuated and appropriated in a manner that served 'in the exercise of the colonial power' (2004:113). In addition, Hall (1999:257-8) presents three crucial aspects of stereotyping: (a) stereotyping creates space for the essentialization/homogenization/naturalization of difference; (b) it constructs and detaches the normal ('us') from the pathological ('them'). In doing so, it excludes and marginalizes 'them' to facilitate the symbolically fixed frontiers of 'imagined communities'; (c) stereotyping emerges in a space of 'gross inequalities of power'. Consequently, the materialization of an unyielding binary paradigm (dominating/dominated) is inevitable. The dominating holds the power of representation and articulation of the dominant doxa. In this vein, the binary dichotomy illustrates at the same time power relations and a violent hierarchy: 'we are not dealing with ... peaceful coexistence ... but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs' (Derrida cited in Hall 1999:258). Hence such violence based relationship give the governed a settled definition and an extremely controlled field of movement.

Minority Students' Conditionality and Encounters at SU

The State of Normalcy

The systematic institutionalization of apartheid, as the immediate succession of colonial governmentality, in South Africa and its systematic racial stratification culminated in the absorption of racial classification as an axiomatic representation of the Other, Africans/self, Afrikaners (see Mkhondo 1993; Soudien 2001:101, 105). Derrida (1985:291) in his critique of the apartheid regime maintains that it appropriated natural human features such as 'colour, blood, birth' as evidence of racial segregation. The racialized differentiation qua regime of representation/truth permeated fundamental social institutions and hence South Africans conceived of and approached each other accordingly, which only reinforced the axiom.

Minority students' definition of their situation reveals a dominant institutional ethos that perpetuates racialization as a state of normalcy and an instrument of self-affirmation. Their everyday practices are entangled in the narratives and tropes that instrumentalize social and cultural difference, which they have unwillingly come to accept, reiterate, and chronically retire to.

Akhona:

Whether Stellenbosch University promotes my blackness or academic interest, I do not know. I do not think so. Of course the institution has its own agenda, but when it concerns me then I must say that I am treated on the basis of my appearance. But I am also responsible for my own life, maybe they do not want me to be educated. My God, if you just could be inside my black skin for only one single day at this place, then you will be able to understand. Do you get what I mean?

Skin colour is emphasized but as an established indicator of difference and fixity. The observations/experiences confirm skin colour as a stigma that dehumanizes, excludes as racially Other, magnifies difference, and admonishes equal entitlements. Participants are forced to have an inordinate respect for all that is established, which regulates the students. This can be conceived of as means of prolonging the history of apartness and securing the hegemonic position and self-definition. As Memmi put it, 'racial affirmation is an instrument of self-affirmation' (2000:97, emphasis retained). One central theme in their narratives is the absence of equality that facilitates to retain the unequal order of positioning that only accentuates 'Afrikanerness' as the prevailing standard, which brings forth mechanisms of confinement. This is when the homogenized groups constitute a structural dyad: the Afrikaner is good-natured, necessary, and universal because minority students are culturally poor and thus have to stay at the designated position and not violate the limits. Their presence is engulfed in a web of asymmetrical relationships that only prolong the colour/dividing-line.

The participants maintain that the lecturers retrieve apartheid thinking in their interaction, reject counter-argument, and are more comfortable with a dominant position. There is a conventional stigma by which they are viewed, and bigotry is experienced to prevail in the lecturers and majority students' gaze. Hence, they draw a line between their own different experiences of subjugation and the way it is experienced by the SU authority, which translates the situation as a state of normalcy and so disregards the inevitable violence that keeps minority students at distance. Such awareness has fostered diverse resistant behaviours as reactions to the perceived normativity, i.e., the regulatory system. It also discloses the sense of simultaneity of the incompatible experiences (socialization from home and the unavoidable racial socialization at SU) of 'we' and 'they-belonging', a condition that inescapably entails reproduction/reinforcement of the Manichaean repertoire, as it is articulated within the institutional boundaries.

Tshepo:

Black students are forced to fit into the Afrikaner and Afrikaans set up. This is disastrous because many of the black students do not make it to their graduation and they only become statistics. This is what they want

here because the university does not see it as an immediate problem. If you fail your studies then you have to blame the colour of your skin, and if you go against the rules then you are public enemy number one.

The fixity of the racialized frontiers at SU renders minority students' cultural and social life as diametrically opposed and intrinsically incongruent with the established ethos. Hence, minority students do not see the regulatory structure of the university to facilitate procedures and a policy that could possibly accommodate their educational necessities. The university's strong rules and education structure that immediately reprimand is constantly reiterated. This condition destabilizes the will/courage of the many of the minority students to continue their studies, which, to utilize Fanon's remark, 'becomes more and more indecisive, more and more phantom-like' (2006:24). The side-effects of the ethos of SU are many dropouts, deterioration of the students' self-esteem, and suicide attempts. According to Koen et al., (2006:404), 'on average about 25 per cent of students leave higher education institutions annually in South Africa because they are excluded on academic and financial grounds'. Such experiences locate the majority of the minority students in a position where they remain ambivalent about holding on to the Afrikanerized limits that radically confront their own and their families' expectations. Lindisizwe asserted that 'we carry our bags when we come here; of course we have a purpose to be here. But it is not easy to reach the day when we can finally show our families the first cheque we receive from our jobs'.

In an informal conversation, Tshepo decidedly uttered that minority students' living conditions are a very sad reflection of the persistence of the apartheid mentality, and that his activism and criticism of the Afrikaners' cultural and social hegemony has not produced the desired effect. There is, however, an absence of commitment to transformation, since SU formally conceals the systematic fortification inequalities under the banner of multiculturalism, which rather maintains racial and cultural difference. Accordingly, SU has failed to take diversity into account, i.e., equality and equal access to education have neither been incorporated in the institutional culture nor promoted.

I met with Mandla for the interview in his small room, where he slept, studied, had his meals, and occasionally met with friends. Having unravelled the racialization and discriminatory setting of the 'past' and its poignant continuation, he emphasized SU as a much contested territory. He continued to reveal the dominant state of normalcy (ethos) at SU, which he thinks is conditioned to perpetuate the racialized regime of representation and Afrikaner ascendancy that concurrently classifies and dreadfully confines minority students' human capabilities. For Mandla, the idea of multiculturalism at SU is but a pretext: 'The focus is believed to be on the so-called multicultural education and affirmative action, which excludes the question of race and ignores the

racial demands of SU that tells you to adapt to its white rules or leave'. Multiculturalism or cultural transformation of SU, then, is a 'post'-apartheid attribute that conceals its present identity and explains capacities that it deliberately contains. Mandla's astute remark clearly demonstrates the incessant policy of either/or: minority students are left with two options: either adapt to the existing space of subjugation or seek another place. The social and educational environment of SU is embroiled in distinctions that disrupt and render minority students' life-world entirely invisible. An important instrument that regulates such invisibility and command is the 'authorized' Afrikaans language, which is used to structure the conditionality of the students' sense of individuality and group identity/belonging. The language dilemma becomes an exclusionary force that embodies the techniques and/or processes by which SU secures its authority in the eyes of the students it governs.

The Ubiquity of Afrikaans

In 2002, the South African government in order to root out the tradition of apartheid governmentality obliged the 'Historically White Universities' (HWU) to accommodate the new 'rainbow nation' and its educational policies. Hence, it required that HWU submit language strategies that ensured transformation and equal access to education (Ministry of Education 2002:13). The government's transformation plans remain to be implemented, as the question of language rights and promotion remains a national dilemma (Van der Waal 2002).

At SU, the transformational plan has proved inefficacious and resulted in the appropriation of multiculturalism to make possible the hegemonic language planning which only extends the monolingual and homogenous tradition of SU (Bognitz 2010; Mabokela 2001). Although the university formally maintains itself to be a bilingual (Afrikaans and English) institution, the practicability of active bilingualism is still considered problematic: 'The University of Stellenbosch is committed to the use and sustained development of Afrikaans as an academic language in a multilingual context' (Stellenbosch University Language Policy 2002:1). Since the university is viewed as an Afrikaner territory with roughly 55 per cent of Afrikaans-speaking students that include students of 'colour' (SU Annual Report 2008), Afrikaans is compellingly protected and not seen as a barrier that would impede minority students' academic progress and institutional participation. In the Stellenbosch University Vision Statement for 2012, the significance of its '*special duty*' to '*exercise a large influence*' is clearly stressed: 'It [SU] is an *active* role-player in the development of South African society; it has a campus culture that welcomes *a diversity of people and ideas*; and it promotes *Afrikaans* as a language of teaching and science in a multilingual context' (2012:9, emphasis added). In this context, Afrikaans is tremendously accentuated and becomes the force of enlightenment and change.

As such, it refers to the cultural logics of apartheid accumulation that targets displacement, which induces subjects to respond fluidly.

Brink's lucid account unpacks the *taaldebat* (language debate) at SU as a 'political campaign' (2006:chap. 3): the debate is the undertaking that connects Afrikaans to the Afrikaner's cultural, social, and political history. In this vein, the historian Herman Giliomee does not attempt a synthesis but tautology and hence refers to the post-apartheid South Africa as 'the single greatest danger to Afrikaans' (cited in Brink 2006:62). Giliomee's conformist mission unearthed Afrikaans as essential to the Afrikaner historical and cultural (ID)entity. Therefore, it is to be kept on an equal level with English, which he stresses as an immediate threat: '*If Stellenbosch University is to verengels [Anglicise] any further, then it is Ichabod for Afrikaans*' (Ibid. 71, emphasis retained). He authoritatively contends that the institutional language policy of Afrikaans universities has to instrumentalize Afrikaans as the primary language: 'This institutional language policy should be clearly laid down and be non-negotiable. Academics should be informed that any deviation will be regarded as a serious misdemeanour' (Ibid: 68). As a result, Afrikaans is not a mere language but wistfulness for roots or a reservoir of culture, which sets and controls the symbolically fixed frontiers and to which all other South African languages are to submit. In fact, SU has endorsed such patterns of calculation as constructive principles in the rigorous development of Afrikaans.

Education is merely made possible through Afrikaans provided that English is appropriated for raising questions, if at all, and perplexing synopses: 'Afrikaans is by default the language of learning and teaching at undergraduate level, while English is used to a greater extent at the postgraduate level' (Stellenbosch University Language Policy 2002:3). It is the maintenance of unilingualism that is at stake, although the promotion of bilingualism is ambiguously manifested in the Language Policy. In fact, the bilingual regulation (Afrikaans and English) dates back to the implementation of language-in-education policy of apartheid government, which required African students to learn through Afrikaans (Heugh 2003, study II). Thus, the policy functioned as a political strategy to preserve the social and political structures, which implied, except from eliminating other languages, to inculcate a subaltern space for the Africans. The political move came to form the basis of an enormously significant event, namely the revolt against 'Bantu Education' by thousands of Soweto school children on 16 June 1976, who refused to be taught in Afrikaans (Alexander 1989:25; Thörn 2010, part. II). Yet, SU continues to view education as a technology of cultural homogeneity and hegemony; subsequently, it recreates and systematically contributes to the persistence of the polarization.

Phumlani:

As an undergraduate student, one has to learn Afrikaans first. Of course the language of instruction was Afrikaans and it was my problem number one ... I really struggled. I failed a couple of subjects, not that I was not able to learn, but I had to learn the language first before I could land in the academic thinking ... I know that this place was never accessible to us.

While SU formally advocates legislation for the sake of transformation and educational support of formerly disadvantaged people, in the classrooms it aims at restricting their language rights, i.e., access to education. The *taalbeleid* (language policy) formally stresses the 50 per cent regulation, but all of the undergraduate participants hold that some teachers are not fluent in English and hence lecture in Afrikaans and others with a bilingual capacity remain faithful to Afrikaans. It happened, as I observed, that the T-option (bilingual) resulted in segregated classes: whenever necessary, the Department of History arranged a separate class for the Afrikaans-speaking students and one for the non-Afrikaans, otherwise Afrikaans had the command.

Language continues as a site of resistance and predictable discrimination: through language control and coercion access, to education is made highly difficult and as a consequence, some of these students fail/quit their studies and leave SU. Derrida writes that, 'even if we could do without any institutions ... schools ... disciplines and curricula language would still be important' (cited in Egéa-Kuehne 2001:201). The protection of Afrikaans as both language and culture reveals inequity of prestige and positionality. The adaptation and instrumentalization of Afrikaans empowers the dominating group in their confidence to speak in/for their language, and entangles minority students, who are to embrace its immediate authority. The condition re-positions minority students in the historical discourse of cultural relativism: that is, unlike your language, our language (Afrikaans) is the language of teaching and science. What is completely ignored here is the post-apartheid context. Mabokela maintains that, 'using Afrikaans as a medium of instruction is like pouring salt into an open wound' (2001:70). The strict imposition of Afrikaans disconnects minority students from learning and participation and, to paraphrase Derrida (1998:1), during their studies at SU, they become individuals cultivated by Afrikaans and hence are subjected to the indisputable Afrikaner culture. This impenetrable rift entails a continuity of strict colour-coded partition, where the minority students' social and cultural world is de-authorized, devalued, and unequivocally Otherized.

In a recent study of student activism in contemporary South Africa, Koen et al., (2006:411) identify racism and language policy as a problematic condition that has historically constituted student protests in the country. They affirm

that 'black' students' struggle for equal access to and involvement in institutional culture and governance at HWUs is still an enduring and unrecognized conundrum (see also, Spreen and Vally 2006; Sikwebu 2008). Moreover, the shared experiences of the participants reveal the intractability of monoculturalism and monolingualism as they unfold the articulated obligation that delineates and clarifies their responsibility instead of rights.

Segregated Spaces and Economic Distress

The sociological analysis of socialization and of how people within a certain social boundary (society) develop a sense of belonging, memory, and shared capital is highly important in this context. Social relations within and between various groups of people tend to devolve and not least enhance social and cultural capital and influence the way they see the Other/self. For example, residential segregation at SU restrains the development of interpersonal relations, public and private facilities, and it is a major barrier to equality, interaction, and well-being of the segregated. But SU also conveys a mode of reference, thinking, acting, and feeling that operates at once in the present and the past that claims the present. Bourdieu (1990:56) stresses that '[I]n each of us, in varying proportions, there is a part of yesterday's man who inevitably predominates in us, since the present amounts to little compared with the long past in the course of which we were formed and from which we result'.

Residential racial segregation or the geographical colour-line, another liability dimension, continues to inscribe racial stratification and isolation rather than free interaction between students. As Mandela cogently put it, 'to be an African in South Africa means that one is politicized from the moment of one's birth. An African child is born in an Africans Only hospital, taken home in an Africans Only bus, lives in an Africans Only area and attends Africans Only schools, if he attends school at all' (2000:109). The continuity of geographical and social segregation is still an astonishing reality in the allegedly post-apartheid South Africa (see Comaroff & Comaroff 2005; Haferburg & Ossenbrügge 2003). The historically drawn frontiers are the most obvious reality in Stellenbosch, where the dividing colour-line entirely separates the Afrikaners' high security complexes from Africans and other South African groups forced to dwell in the townships with very marginal social and economic circumstances. The prototypical, segregated urban space as it was rendered during apartheid follows clearly distinguished areas designed for spatial division of population groups. Stellenbosch is exemplary here, with its Cape-Dutch white-washed architecture delineating not only the geographical centre, but the ordered urban space for the privileged Afrikaner minority, whereas the margins of the town are marked by informal settlements where Africans and another South African group, so-called 'coloured', reside. The division of the urban environment is significantly

compatible with the spatial separation of students in the university residences, strictly following traditional and patriarchal values with regard to background of members and composition of inmates. It is not only residential racial segregation that is reproduced on different levels of spaces in the urban setting, but suspicion is raised against anyone who intends to cross the colour-line.

Lindisizwe:

You have cases where black students are arrested at night without any reason ... Then, arrest a white student too, because they are around all the time. I have never heard of a white student to be arrested even when they physically abuse black students ... They think, if you are black and walk at the middle of the night at the white areas then you are looking for something to steal. This is racism; this is discrimination, I do not care what they say.

The colour-line distinctly clarifies the frontiers that separate Afrikaners' space from the 'Rest'. Since the geographical and social division is already in place, it does not require minority students' recognition; as Said (2003) put it, "they" become "they" accordingly' (p. 54). That is, minority students, like other student groups, are forced to internalize the dominant racialized doxa, which declares the importance of a contained life within the frontiers of one's own 'race'. As a result, they eat together, walk together, talk and debate with each other, sit in classrooms close to each other, and arrange student parties together. They are also pushed out of their social and educational rights, and are locked within segregated enclaves.

Phelisa:

I know that if you as a black person apply for student residence then Goldfields [student residence] will be the first suggestion. This has been so for a very long time. There is still a quota system here ... but the black ones do not remain in the white residences.

Resistant behaviour against social and racial residential segregation that results in appalling and exclusionary conditions takes an overtly political character. In fact, minority students' criticism of language policy and cultural constellation is not inadvertent. SU as a familiar and at once an unfamiliar space guides students to internalize the doxa of the sameness: for example, racialization has been reshaped/appropriated as an 'Ontological Security' (Giddens 1991:35 ff), to condition students' social and psychological make-up. It constitutes the only legitimized philosophy of Other/self. The participants identify the geographic frontiers as endowed with the social, cultural, and economic ones that circumscribe their sense of identity, security, location and mobility.

At the beginning of the academic year of 2008, I observed an overwhelming minority students' criticism of the existing 'Manichaeian' compartments. The main focus was to establish an 'African Student Association', which never came into existence, since the Student Representative Council (SRC) and SU did not promote what they saw to represent a deliberate act of violence against the authoritative ethos. Their demands were equal treatment; academic support in order to achieve academic excellence; equal participation and involvement in the SRC; and reasonable financial support as they can easily take part in the social and cultural activities. Nonetheless, they are segregated not only in respective student or private residences, but in the access to equal material resources, mobility, food, transportation, language, culture, and the entitlement that is the domain of the majority (Afrikaner) group.

Phelisa:

White students ... come mostly from rich families and can afford everything. They can go to expensive restaurants; they have nice cars; they go to pubs and discotheques; they have big parties; they travel to other parts of Western Cape; and they have a wine tasting tour, which are foreign to most of the black students.

The established frontiers with real economic consequences define the life-world of the students and by distinguishing their capacities and group affiliation it forms a doctrine that inscribe in each group a unique identity. The doctrine, which becomes habitus is, then, intended to instinctively guide the students to embrace and practice the university's set of core evaluations and racialized social norms of conduct. In so doing, it effortlessly normalizes the doctrine, which regulates the division, positions, and separates the extremely affluent; whose reality instantly excludes minority students.

Lindisizwe:

I cannot go and buy text books when I do not have enough food to eat. I need to survive ... I face not one or two problems but many. I also want to enjoy my studies and courses and have fun and drink beers and have *braai* [barbeque] with my friends every Friday and Saturday.

The governing body of SU instead of transforming the systematic conditioning that encapsulates minority students' entitlements, reiterates the discourse of individual inability and family background of the students to learn and to keep pace with their respective studies. The relationship as one of co-dependence (dominance-subjection) refers to a reconstitution of the minority student. It informs them, as Fanon (2004:16) revealed, to rather 'get ready to do the *right* thing' (emphasis added). Nevertheless, differences in cultural orientation are measured as an explanatory factor that have an inevitable impact on minority students' gravity toward education in general and their educational motivation

and outcome in particular. The (apartheid) assumptions render the dominant culture advanced and as the only way to achieve academic success, i.e., it is the way to do the 'right thing'. The social world at SU is compartmentalized and the fact of belonging to a 'race' determines one's position/location. As Phumlani restores the voice of the oppressed, 'There is a fundamental need for a financial and educational system that can really accommodate black students, especially those that have been impoverished and deprived of academic life for years'.

Conclusion

The negotiated experiences show the various forms that SU can take to marginalize and exclude minority students from involvement in the institutional culture and its governing bodies. The existing regulation as a structured endeavour that contrives the latent-manifest continuum is essential to take account of, since the various forms of racial exclusion disrupt minority students' academic, individual and social life. The trajectory of the authority of SU and the significance of the racial discourse inevitably relies on the importance of alterity and domination. Therefore, it continues to be self-regulative since the domination and racial differences between the constructed antagonistic groups continuously collapses into racialized categories that further the exploitation of minority students. This is acknowledged by minority students, who reproduce and at once strenuously challenge the normalized compartmentalization, since they engage directly and mostly within the boundaries drawn by the respected colour-line and hence live it economically, socially and above all educationally. Therefore, the implacability is what the excluded students face when they venture the thought or move to disturb the fixed ethos.

Nonetheless, the desire to reproduce and stabilize the apartheid legacy of producing fixed identities is camouflaged with the rhetoric of multiculturalism and the new 'democratic' dispensation, which also continuously curtail minority students' academic interest and critical thinking/empowerment. This is sociologically significant and appealing. That is, the apartheid racial socialization and systematic segregation cannot be transformed by merely using the language of the abstract 'rainbow nation' to argue that the new (de)racialized discourse will easily replace the apartheid edifice. While the colour-line at SU regulates the social interactions and relationships and reproduces the biological racism of the colonial/apartheid era, it enforces a dominant racialized cognition that is imposed on both, the majority and minority students. For the latter group, SU as an essentially challenging and discontinuous location/situation is cumbersome and extraneous. For example, they are faced with a disintegrating world of either/or: as Lindisizwe puts it, 'believe in us [lecturers at SU] and you will do well', otherwise you will remain unaware of how to do the right thing.

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Algérie : le rapport savoir-pouvoir ou le rêve avorté de la différenciation par le savoir¹

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Résumé

Cet article analyse le rapport de l'université au pouvoir politique en Algérie. Il décrit l'évolution de ce rapport depuis l'indépendance dans un contexte où l'État contrôle toutes les activités économiques et sociales. Au lendemain de l'indépendance, l'enseignement supérieur apparaît d'abord comme la voie d'accès aux positions hautement distinctives et, donc, un enjeu socioculturel et politique central. Il en résulte un processus d'autonomie des universités qui a révélé des enjeux sociopolitiques et économiques pouvant mettre en péril les termes du rapport savoir-pouvoir. Dès lors, l'université est progressivement réduite au rôle d'outil de sujétion et ses agents considérés comme une simple émanation du Pouvoir. L'article montre comment le pouvoir politique, devenu plus dépendant du global que du local, a détourné l'université de sa mission qui est de mettre en œuvre une approche scientifique enracinée dans la culture et la nature locales et en phase avec la science internationale.

Abstract

This article analyzes relationship between university and political power in Algeria. It describes the evolution of this relationship since independence in a context where the state controls all economic and social activities. In the aftermath of independence, higher education appears first as the gateway to positions highly distinctive and therefore a challenge sociocultural and political center. The result is a process of autonomy of universities which revealed sociopolitical and economic issues that could jeopardize the terms of the relationship between knowledge and power. Therefore, the university is gradually reduced to the tool of subjection and its agents a simple emanation of power. The article shows how political power has become more dependent on the global and the local university has diverted its mission to implement a scientific approach rooted in the culture and nature in line with local and international science.

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Introduction

La société algérienne se caractérisait au lendemain de l'indépendance par une très faible différenciation économique, sociale et culturelle. Cette caractéristique posait de façon cruciale la question de la restructuration de l'espace social et du système de valeurs sur lequel allait se structurer la société. Après plus d'un siècle de nivellement par le bas opéré par le système colonial, la structure sociale – qui donne à voir un espace constitué de détenteurs de différentes catégories de capitaux : économique, scolaire... – était entièrement à reconstruire. À défaut d'autres formes de capitaux, l'accès à l'éducation et au savoir scolaire s'imposait naturellement comme l'élément constitutif de ce système de valeurs et le seul facteur légitime de différenciation sociale.

Dans un contexte où l'État contrôle toutes les activités économiques et sociales, l'enseignement supérieur apparaît comme la voie d'accès aux positions hautement distinctives de l'administration publique et donc un enjeu socioculturel et politique central. Son statut social est alors au zénith et ses diplômes quasi assimilés à des titres de noblesse. Il devient de ce fait le lieu où se reflète le mieux le rapport savoir-pouvoir, mettant en évidence l'existence d'une corrélation entre le statut social du savoir et son rapport au pouvoir. C'est ce rapport que ce papier tente d'esquisser en trois chapitres succincts. Le premier définit le cadre théorique et la signification donnée ici aux notions de savoir et de pouvoir. Le deuxième porte sur les conditions sociopolitiques dans lesquelles s'est établi, au lendemain de l'indépendance, le rapport savoir-pouvoir au sein de l'université. Le troisième chapitre analyse, à travers ce rapport, le processus d'émergence, d'affirmation et de déclin du champ académique.

Le rapport savoir-pouvoir

Il va de soi qu'ici comme ailleurs, savoir et pouvoir sont toujours dans un rapport d'interdépendance, jamais d'extériorité. Cependant, dans le contexte analysé, celui d'une lutte serrée pour la différenciation par le savoir, ce rapport revêt une intensité particulière qui va se focaliser au sein de l'université comme principal lieu de production et de diffusion du savoir. En tant que capital symbolique, facteur de différenciation et de promotion, le savoir n'avait alors qu'un concurrent, la qualité de « révolutionnaire » (*thâouri*), héritée de la guerre de libération nationale. Dans leurs rapports au pouvoir, la symbolique de la « révolution » et la symbolique du « savoir » se trouvent donc en situation de compétition. C'est ainsi que les détenteurs du Pouvoir issu de la Révolution vivent leur déficit en savoir comme une lourde menace pour l'unique source de légitimité dont ils peuvent se prévaloir. Cette menace est d'autant plus pesante que le déficit de capital scientifique affecte les plus haut placés d'entre eux, car

comme l'a montré Gilbert Meynier (2008), le niveau d'instruction des dirigeants de la révolution baisse au fur et à mesure que l'on se rapproche du sommet de la pyramide.

Pour autant, il ne s'agit pas ici de mettre en opposition irréductible *savoir* et *pouvoir* ou de soutenir que le savoir ne peut s'épanouir que là où le pouvoir se confine à l'extérieur du champ universitaire. Il n'est donc pas question de soutenir, comme Foucault nous en prévient, que le savoir ne peut se développer « que là où sont suspendues les relations de pouvoir... » (1975:32) C'est au contraire l'interaction entre savoir et pouvoir et la capacité du savoir à gêner ou à brouiller les jeux du pouvoir qui entraînent ce dernier, par réaction, à en chercher la légitimité ou, à défaut, à le contrôler. Est écartée également la dichotomie qui oppose un savoir par essence libérateur à un pouvoir qui s'évertue à déjouer cette libération. Il ne s'agit pas plus, comme le rappelle encore Foucault, d'affranchir le savoir de tout pouvoir, la savoir étant en lui-même pouvoir.

C'est justement là que réside le nœud du problème. Construit social, le savoir se définit par rapport à un contexte sociohistorique donné. Or, ce contexte est ici celui d'une société nivelée par le bas, dans laquelle il se présente comme le principal, sinon l'unique, facteur de différenciation, devenant ainsi potentiellement un puissant instrument de pouvoir et de domination. Pour renforcer et légitimer son pouvoir, le Pouvoir n'a d'autre choix que d'investir dans le savoir.

L'Université, élément structurant de l'État et de la société en projet ?

Au lendemain de l'indépendance, en 1962, l'enseignement supérieur devait ainsi contribuer à résoudre deux difficultés majeures liées à la configuration socioéducative héritée de la colonisation, par ailleurs non complètement surmontées à ce jour : doter l'État d'une légitimité scientifique et technique et réorganiser la société sur la base du savoir, l'égalitarisme ambiant et l'orientation socialiste de cette époque excluaient toute distinction par l'économique. « Révolution » et « savoir » restaient dès lors les deux seules formes de légitimité possible.

La première forme de légitimité était là, mais tout un chacun pouvait s'en prévaloir. La « légitimité révolutionnaire » [*Al charyiâ Al thaouria*]² représentait à cette époque un symbole national certes fort mais peu différenciant en ce sens où l'exclusivité n'en est reconnue à personne en particulier, comme le signifie alors l'inscription qui a soudainement recouvert les murs des villes : « un seul héros : le peuple ». Les sacrifices consentis dans les luttes pour la libération rendaient impératif le désir d'en finir avec la « situation coloniale » (Balandier 2001), les causes et la finalité de la révolution étant encore vivaces dans la conscience collective. Condition nécessaire (voire) mais insuffisante, la « légitimité révolutionnaire » devait donc se doubler de la « légitimité du savoir ».

Quant à la deuxième forme de légitimité, celle du savoir, si peu de personnes pouvaient à l'inverse s'en prévaloir, elle représentait une aspiration partagée par tous les membres de la société, comme le montre l'immense investissement matériel et affectif consenti par les parents et par l'État dans l'éducation. Pour répondre à cette demande, l'État naissant et ses institutions ne pouvaient se limiter à puiser seulement leur légitimité dans la symbolique de la « révolution » ; ils doivent aussi s'appuyer sur celle que confère le « savoir » (*Îlm*). Cette condition aura des conséquences sociales et politiques très importantes car elle établit un rapport social au savoir dans lequel ce dernier revêt une fonction essentiellement *instrumentale*, au sens d'outil devant permettre à la nouvelle génération de sortir des conditions de vie de ses parents. En ce sens, l'enseignement supérieur est vécu, en tant que lieu essentiel de production et de diffusion de savoir, comme la porte d'accès par excellence aux positions les plus valorisantes, celles qui, tout en conduisant au Pouvoir politique, tiennent de lui. Dans cette conception instrumentale que partagent État et société, le savoir est pensé non comme *libération* et *créativité* mais avant tout comme « construction institutionnelle et idéologique » (Touraine 1992:167)

Les institutions d'enseignement supérieur devaient jouer un rôle important pour surmonter les deux difficultés mentionnées plus haut dans la mesure où c'est à elles qu'échoit en grande partie la mission de structurer la société sur la base du savoir et de doter l'État de la légitimité scientifique et technique, en étoffant ses rangs de professionnels compétents. L'État se définit ici par les institutions qui sont en tous points identiques du point de vue de la structure formelle à ceux que l'on trouve dans les pays démocratiques, alors que le mode d'exercice du pouvoir s'en distingue totalement. Ceci introduit une différence majeure entre État et Pouvoir, différence au demeurant largement banalisée en Algérie. Face au vide institutionnel et professionnel du contexte de l'après guerre, la construction de l'État, des professions scientifiques et techniques et de la société devait se faire quasi simultanément, l'émergence de l'un soutenant celle des autres. Tout se passe donc d'abord comme si l'enseignement supérieur allait être l'élément et l'espace structurant de l'État et de la société.

« Legs colonial » et fondation de l'enseignement supérieur algérien

Bien qu'elle fut une colonie de peuplement, considérée quasiment comme une partie du territoire français, l'Algérie s'est retrouvée à l'indépendance devant un vide sidéral en matière d'éducation et d'enseignement supérieur. Insignifiant, le legs colonial n'a laissé de traces significatives ni en termes d'effectifs (seuls quelques 500 étudiants algériens étaient inscrits), ni en termes d'infrastructures (une seule université à Alger). Au point de vue des savoirs produits et diffusés, l'université répondait exclusivement aux besoins de la colonisation et des colons

européens (Colonna et Brahim 1976). Par rapport à la société algérienne, elle représentait une structure *off shore*, au mieux un parfait isolat. Dérisoire était aussi la relève scientifique laissée par le régime colonial qui a pris soin de brûler l'unique bibliothèque universitaire avant que quitter le pays. Il n'y avait donc au plan scientifique aucun continuum entre les deux périodes coloniale et post-coloniale.

Au lendemain de l'indépendance, l'université coloniale représentait donc pour les Algériens l'exemple même de contre-modèle et une situation à dépasser au plus vite. L'embryon d'infrastructure hérité est d'ailleurs vite éclipsé par les initiatives multiformes de l'État naissant (multiplication des universités, écoles et instituts, créations institutionnelles, recrutement massif d'étudiants et de professeurs venant des cinq continents (France, Canada, URSS, Inde, pays arabes...). Des actions intensives de formation (entamée alors que le pays était encore en guerre) et de construction d'infrastructures, menées selon des modèles radicalement différents, ont enlevé à l'université coloniale toute possibilité de peser de manière significative sur le devenir de l'université algérienne. Ainsi, sur le plan des contenus et des profils scientifiques, cette dernière doit peu de choses, dans ses échecs comme dans ses réussites, au modèle colonial, à part l'usage de la langue française dont on ne peut évidemment ignorer les effets. De sorte que l'université algérienne postindépendance apparaît comme une pure création étatique au sens où, sur le plan des contenus et de l'orientation scientifique, elle n'est le prolongement ni des institutions coloniales, ni des traditions universitaires locales préexistantes.

Cependant, si l'université algérienne doit peu à un quelconque legs scientifique colonial, la configuration de l'espace sociopolitique, tel qu'il a été façonné par la colonisation, va l'affecter considérablement. D'une part, si l'université algérienne a réussi à se détacher du système colonial au plan des contenus scientifiques et pédagogiques, elle en hérite ce qu'il a de pire : sa très grande dépendance à l'égard du pouvoir politique. Autant l'université coloniale était dépendante du Pouvoir colonial, autant l'université algérienne le sera du Pouvoir politique qui se met en place après l'indépendance. D'autre part, la structure sociale héritée de la colonisation, notamment son haut niveau d'analphabétisme et sa très faible différenciation économique, sociale et culturelle, a agi de manière assez paradoxale comme un facteur de valorisation de l'éducation en général et de l'enseignement supérieur en particulier. Chez une population longtemps privée de savoir et convaincue que c'est le seul facteur de promotion sociale, la demande de scolarisation était telle que le Pouvoir politique pouvait difficilement l'ignorer. De sorte que l'héritage est à rechercher davantage dans le rapport savoir-pouvoir et dans l'indifférenciation de la structure sociale que dans le champ des savoirs proprement dit.

Un modèle flottant entre « occidentalisme » et « localisme »

Cependant, si elle a su éviter le modèle colonial, l'université algérienne a repris à son compte l'essentiel des traits du modèle « occidental » dominant, notamment français³, que l'on fit passer comme « universel » et, donc, unique voie vers la modernité. Plusieurs facteurs ont contribué à imposer ce référentiel : la domination de la langue française, le recours massif à la coopération étrangère, ou encore l'influence au sein de l'État de courants de type saint-simonien (comme le courant dit des « industrialistes ») imprégnés de ce « scientisme universaliste » dénoncé par nombre d'auteurs comme John Saul (1993) et Immanuel Wallerstein (2006). Bien que le discours fondateur des Instituts technologiques⁴ et de la Réforme de l'Enseignement Supérieur de 1971 assigne aux universités de s'adapter aux « réalités économiques, sociales et culturelles de la société algérienne », les pratiques scientifiques et pédagogiques sont largement inspirées par ce référentiel, qui reste prégnant jusqu'à nos jours (Kadri 1991). Mais comme l'accès à l'universel passe toujours par la porte du local, l'université vit depuis dans un état de flottement entre les deux, dans un état d'a-historicité, n'accédant ni à l'un, ni à l'autre.

Cette orientation a été également favorisée par la signification sociale associée au savoir. Celui-ci est socialement perçu comme instrument de sortie de crise, de sortie d'une « situation coloniale » faite de pauvreté et d'analphabétisme généralisés. L'urgence de la demande sociale qui en résulte est telle qu'elle a occulté la question de la culture, de la langue et de l'ancrage local des savoirs, les réduisant au statut de simples slogans politiques. Elle a de ce fait même profité à la langue française et refoulé la langue arabe dans les appareils de propagande du régime. Cette situation d'urgence s'est accompagnée d'un discours apologétique sur le « progrès » et la « modernité », vus comme les attributs universels qui ont fait la puissance du colonisateur, et qu'il convient de s'approprier par le contournement des traditions et des coutumes locales, perçues, elles, comme contraires au « progrès social » (*Ettakaddoum*), idée maîtresse du mouvement indépendantiste national. Ainsi, mise à part leur instrumentalisation par les élites politiques, la langue arabe autant que la langue française en tant que telle n'ont jamais fait l'objet, au lendemain de l'indépendance, de demande sociale spécifique. La langue française était tout simplement là et occupait une position dominante dans le secteur administratif et économique. Même les catégories sociales arabophones et islamisantes envoyaient leurs enfants de préférence dans des écoles francophones, jugées plus aptes à leur assurer un avenir prospère. Faisant une conception instrumentale du savoir, la société faisait peu de cas, selon le dicton chinois, de « la couleur du chat, pourvu qu'il attrape la souris ».

Ainsi, l'arabisation de l'enseignement, toujours présentée comme une revendication culturelle et identitaire et jamais comme une condition pour

l'appropriation sociale des savoirs, était restée pendant longtemps un slogan politique sans effets pratiques réels. Rendue facteur de division politique plutôt que creuset d'une identité en construction, elle est progressivement métamorphosée en une « langue de bois » sans consistance scientifique et culturelle réelle, contribuant davantage à l'appauvrissement de l'université qu'à une « assimilation à soi » (Canguilhem 1965) des techniques et des savoirs modernes. Tirillée entre deux univers linguistiques et culturels sans ancrage social, l'université prend la forme d'une entité hybride, composée d'éléments linguistiques disparates et désaccordés les uns des autres. Au-delà de certaines nuances qui relèvent d'« effets d'établissement » (Cousin 1999) localisés et variables dans l'espace et dans le temps, cette configuration reste le modèle dominant et reflète la coexistence de courants politiques tenant de l'un et de l'autre univers linguistiques. Résultat d'un « arbitraire » plus politique que « culturel » (Bourdieu et Passeron 1970:24-25), l'ambivalence de l'université rend compte des rapports de forces entre, d'une part, les groupes sociopolitiques qui y sont représentés et d'autre part, entre ces derniers et le Pouvoir césariste qui les maintient en situation de coexistence conflictuelle, sans permettre à l'un ou l'autre de l'emporter. Elle perpétue ainsi les conditions de production et de reproduction d'une société duale (Guerid 2007) dont la division contribue à assurer tant l'arbitrage que l'arbitraire du champ politique.

Si le système qui se met en place s'organise autour de la suprématie du Pouvoir, il laisse, au-delà de cette « ligne rouge », à ses groupes constitutifs la possibilité de se disputer les différentes fonctions (économiques, sociales, culturelles...) et de s'adresser à des couches sociales différentes. Ainsi, pour l'essentiel, l'enseignement religieux s'adresse aux couches arabisantes et défavorisées, l'enseignement technologique et professionnel aux couches moyennes et moyennes inférieures en majorité citadines et l'enseignement académiques aux couches supérieures et moyennes supérieures nourrissant des ambitions de domination politique (Haddab 1980 ; Khelifaoui 2000). Cette liberté arbitrée a donné lieu, par exemple, à plusieurs sous-systèmes cloisonnés, constitués par des établissements d'enseignement supérieur à vocation professionnelle, religieuse ou académique au sens large, d'orientation culturelle et sociale différente, reflétant le conglomérat de tendances politiques qui coexistent sous l'aile du Pouvoir. Ces sous-systèmes représentent des espèces d'aires de jeux strictement clôturées et délimitées par le Pouvoir.

Ainsi, savoir et pouvoir ne sont jamais loin l'un de l'autre. Le savoir pèse (par sa présence comme par son absence) sur la position que son détenteur occupe au sein de l'espace social, même si le déterminant ultime reste le Pouvoir. Ce besoin de savoir comme facteur de légitimation explique, par exemple, les mesures spéciales prises au lendemain de l'indépendance pour permettre aux anciens combattants d'entrer à l'université sans avoir à en remplir les conditions

d'accès. Il explique également, plus tard dans les années 1990, le recrutement par les partis politiques d'une clientèle préférentiellement parmi les détenteurs de titres universitaires. Ainsi, les périodes d'élections, notamment parlementaires, sont souvent l'occasion pour chaque parti d'afficher dans la presse le pourcentage d'universitaires parmi ses candidats. De même, l'accès au capital économique (ici la distribution de la rente) passe généralement par la détention (plus souvent illégitime que légitime) du capital symbolique représenté par le titre de « révolutionnaire » ou d'« universitaire », si toutefois l'un et l'autre ont accepté les « règles du jeu » imposées par le Pouvoir, donné les preuves de leur acceptation et, ce faisant, renoncé à l'éthique scientifique ou politique. C'est dans ce rapport savoir-pouvoir tendu et méfiant que l'enseignement supérieur se structure et se déstructure depuis l'indépendance. La partie qui suit analyse, à la lumière de ce rapport et sur trois périodes distinctes, ce processus de structuration-déstructuration.

Émergence, autonomie et déclin du champ universitaire

Dans ce contexte, l'enseignement supérieur a connu une évolution en trois moments. Le premier correspond à la période fondatrice, au cours de laquelle les institutions ont été mises en place et les différents groupes sociaux impliqués dans l'enseignement supérieur (enseignants, dirigeants, étudiants...) constitués. Le deuxième se caractérise, après l'effervescence de la période fondatrice, par la stabilité et l'autonomisation. C'est un moment d'ajustement et de régulation où les composantes du champ universitaire et de l'espace social de manière générale tentent de négocier de nouveaux rapports au champ politique. Le troisième moment marque une rupture avec ce processus de stabilité et d'autonomie et se manifeste par un retour de la régulation autoritaire et une dégradation de la condition enseignante. On pourrait qualifier ces deux derniers moments, à la suite de Bourdieu et Passeron (1970:113) d'« organique » pour le premier et de « critique » pour le deuxième.

Émergence et autonomie du champ universitaire

Le premier moment va de 1962 à la fin des années 1970. Il fait ressortir le rôle fondateur et démiurge de l'État dans l'émergence de multiples établissements d'enseignement et de formation supérieurs, ciblant plus spécifiquement les professions scientifiques et techniques (Henni 1990). Les professions hautement diplômées, notamment dans les filières de génie, se sont constituées en grand nombre durant cette phase, couvrant un large éventail de spécialités. Elles présentent la particularité d'être davantage le résultat d'initiatives étatiques que d'une dynamique économique émanant des entreprises. L'Algérie fait là figure d'exception par comparaison aux pays industrialisés où ces filières se sont surtout développées à l'initiative de l'industrie (Shinn 1980). Le pays étant

dépourvu d'infrastructure industrielle, le champ économique était en lui-même trop faible pour influencer, indépendamment du champ politique, l'orientation de l'enseignement supérieur. Un important réseau d'instituts technologiques avait été certes créé par le secteur économique, mais il le fut essentiellement par la bureaucratie d'État pour répondre autant à des objectifs économiques que de stratification sociale. Pour autant, s'il n'existait pas de demande économique indépendante de l'État (celui-ci en monopolisait l'exercice), il y avait à l'inverse une très forte demande sociale de savoir, relayée et concrétisée par un État encore imprégné de nationalisme indépendantiste. C'est ainsi que l'essentiel de l'infrastructure et des institutions d'enseignement supérieur a été réalisé durant cette période, qui a vu la construction de plusieurs dizaines d'universités, d'écoles supérieures et d'instituts.

Le deuxième moment se caractérise par l'émergence progressive, de la fin des années 1970 au début des années 1990, d'un champ universitaire relativement autonome. Cette émergence est le résultat concomitant de la formation de groupes professionnels nouveaux, de la « libéralisation » qui a suivi la crise de la fin des années 1980 et de l'affaiblissement des pouvoirs politiques qui en a résulté. La formation d'un nombre significatif de professionnels a conduit à une transformation significative de l'espace social qui a pris une consistance nouvelle. Le champ universitaire prend forme au fur et à mesure que les universités sont construites, que les enseignants sont formés et viennent remplacer les « coopérants » étrangers. Le même processus se manifeste dans le champ économique avec la formation d'un grand nombre d'ingénieurs et de managers. On peut en dire autant pour tous les autres champs professionnels (médias, magistrats...). Ce mouvement de constitution de groupes sociaux conduit à la recomposition des rapports de forces entre le champ politique et les différents champs socioprofessionnels. Désormais, le Pouvoir n'a plus le contrôle absolu sur les politiques éducative et économique, qu'il doit négocier avec des acteurs nouvellement constitués. Pour la première fois, les relations entre le champ universitaire et le champ économique ne sont plus centralement définies et médiatisées par le Pouvoir, et le terrain de l'action sociale n'est plus occupé uniquement par ceux qui, désignés par lui, agissent en son nom. Sous les coups de boutoir des luttes d'autonomisation professionnelle et sociale, le Pouvoir, comme unique, décideur a du opérer un retrait qui ne sera toutefois que momentané.

Sur le terrain, l'autonomie du champ universitaire se manifeste à travers un double processus : celui d'une appropriation des activités scientifiques et pédagogiques, au sens où le contenu des programmes et les pratiques pédagogiques sont de moins en moins centralement prescrits comme durant la première période, et celui de la mise en place progressive de liens, plus informels que formels, avec d'autres champs socioprofessionnels, notamment le champ

économique. L'émergence de champs professionnels autonomes donne lieu à des négociations directes entre les acteurs de base (universitaires, ingénieurs, managers...) sans l'habituelle et omniprésente médiation de la bureaucratie, prolongement du Pouvoir au sein des institutions. Les nombreux textes réglementaires édictés au cours des années 1970 et 1980 pour régir la vie économique et sociale sont oubliés, sans même que l'on pense à les abroger, laissant les intérêts catégoriels s'exprimer dans un cadre de relations informelles. Cette période est mise à profit par le corps professoral pour s'organiser et vivre un double déploiement syndical et professionnel, accédant sans médiation aux deux univers qui vont notablement participer à la transformation de la profession : la science internationale et l'entreprise industrielle.

Les actions collectives locales, les grèves, les interventions dans les journaux indépendants (apparus à la même période et résultant de la même dynamique socioprofessionnelle), très ouvertes aux préoccupations des universitaires, transforment le fonctionnement des institutions et leur rapport au Pouvoir politique. Dans les départements pédagogiques, les programmes sont critiqués et modifiés. Des structures plus flexibles et moins dirigistes sont mises en place, réduisant l'emprise des fonctions administratives sur les fonctions scientifiques et pédagogiques des organes d'évaluation et de consultation ; comme les conseils scientifiques, sont initiés ; des critères de productivité scientifique sont introduits dans la gestion des carrières ; la question des « fonctions économiques et sociales » de l'enseignement est à nouveau posée. Des liens directs, souvent personnalisés grâce aux anciens étudiants, sont établis avec le tissu économique et social. Les débats sur les modalités de collaboration entre les universités et les entreprises reprennent avec une intensité sans précédent depuis les grandes rencontres de 1969 et 1970 qui ont été à l'origine de la création des Instituts technologiques et de la Réforme de l'Enseignement Supérieur de 1971. Ces initiatives multiformes, qui émanent de tous les champs professionnels, menacent de réduire considérablement l'emprise du Pouvoir sur la société.

La reprise en main politique de l'université

Le troisième moment date du début des années 1990 et représente un changement de cap important. Il s'est manifesté avec brutalité à plusieurs niveaux : la reprise en main politique de l'université par le Pouvoir, la déprofessionnalisation, l'augmentation massive des effectifs étudiants et la dégradation des conditions de vie et de travail des enseignants. Au cours d'un processus à rebours de celui qui caractérisait le deuxième moment, le contrôle de l'enseignement supérieur est repassé du champ universitaire au champ politique, national d'abord, international ensuite, avec la décision d'importer la réforme européenne dite « Processus de Bologne ». Sous l'effet conjugué de

la désindustrialisation, des « réajustements structurels » et de la guerre civile, les différents groupes professionnels sont démantelés et affaiblis, privant ainsi le champ social des principaux ressorts de son autonomie. Ce démantèlement a créé un vide social, politique et intellectuel qui a favorisé le retour en force du Pouvoir central. Ce retour a revêtu une forme autoritaire et revancharde dans son rapport à la société en général et aux universitaires en particulier et, à l'inverse, de soumission au champ de la globalisation. Désormais les réformes, notamment celles qui touchent à l'enseignement supérieur, sont essentiellement guidées par cette perspective : mise au pas des groupes sociaux susceptibles de velléité d'autonomie à l'égard du Pouvoir et inféodation aux forces de la globalisation.

Ce processus de mise sous contrôle du champ universitaire par le champ politique pris la forme d'une cooptation généralisée de l'ensemble des responsables supérieurs (recteurs) et intermédiaires (doyens) d'universités. Les positions dominantes au sein du champ universitaire sont définies et attribuées de l'extérieur, selon les critères du champ politique. Désignés par le Pouvoir, les détenteurs de ces positions tendent à leur tour à reproduire les mêmes pratiques de cooptation, sur la base des mêmes critères d'allégeance, aux niveaux inférieurs de la hiérarchie universitaire. Les critères de désignation ont conduit les universités à être dirigées par des agents sans légitimité scientifique, ne pouvant s'assurer une carrière scientifique (incompatible avec la mission de contrôle policier qui leur est impartie), et dont les attentes ne peuvent donc être satisfaites que par le recours à des « pouvoirs acquis sur d'autres terrains » (Bourdieu 1984:117) que celui du savoir.

C'est ainsi que les critères de fonctionnement du champ politique se sont substitués à ceux du champ universitaire, conduisant à un processus de déprofessionnalisation de ce dernier et réduisant sa marge aux seuls domaines qui sont sans enjeu pour le Pouvoir. Dans le même temps, la mise en faillite du système industriel (par les réformes introduites à partir du milieu des années 1980) a conduit à l'éclatement des professions d'encadrement comme les ingénieurs et les managers, qui étaient les interlocuteurs privilégiés du champ universitaire. Le Pouvoir, qui avait pourtant la main haute sur la gestion des entreprises publiques, imputa aux gestionnaires et aux ingénieurs la responsabilité du fiasco industriel, les emprisonna par centaines sous le prétexte de malversation et les accula à l'émigration. En quelques années, tous les groupes professionnels susceptibles de s'ériger en médiateur de la relation entre le politique et la société sont anéantis.

De cette reprise en main, il en résulte une forme complexe d'exercice du pouvoir dans la mesure où, comme chez Foucault, celui-ci s'incarne non plus dans une institution ou une personne, mais dans des pratiques d'allégeance, d'intérêt, de solidarité clanique que le Pouvoir tolère, voire encourage, en

contrepartie des services rendus. En même temps que le pouvoir se centralise, les formes de son exercice se déconcentrent, pénètrent les pratiques sociales et s'y reproduisent jusqu'aux niveaux les plus inférieurs. De sorte que ce n'est plus l'État qui est source ou point de départ du pouvoir, mais un ensemble de pratiques qui, souvent si ce n'est toujours, contredisent l'orientation des institutions et de l'État, lesquels revêtent dans ce contexte la fonction de simples paravents. Au lieu de la rationalité proclamée dans le discours, les institutions scientifiques sont gérées en fonction des conditions d'exercice et de pérennité du Pouvoir. Celui-ci en vient ainsi à être, non pas « partout et nulle part » comme chez Foucault, ce qui aurait signifié que sa présence est admise et intégrée, mais partout tout court, comme chez Orwell, où il est enduré plus qu'accepté.

Dépourvu de toute forme de légitimité autre que celle de la force, ne parvenant pas à imposer aux groupes sociaux émergents qu'ils le perçoivent, pour reprendre Bourdieu, comme il demande à être perçu, le Pouvoir réagit en intensifiant les pratiques d'humiliation, principalement en direction des universitaires. Dès lors qu'ils s'écartent de la fonction de relais du Pouvoir qui leur est dévolue, ces derniers font l'objet d'un traitement particulier visant leur identité professionnelle (non respect des normes professionnelles les plus élémentaires en matière de promotion et de sanction, recrutement massif d'étudiants sur la base de calcul politique...) et leur dignité (réduisant progressivement leur ambition à une stricte demande alimentaire). « Nous allons vous affamer », répondent les recteurs aux professeurs en grève, s'acharnant à rabaisser ceux qui refusent de les reconnaître et dont l'existence même leur rappelle leur handicap. Dans *Les Vigiles*, l'écrivain assassiné Tahar Djaout restitue bien ce rapport lorsque le personnage incarnant le Pouvoir, se proclamant fondateur et « vigile » protecteur de la nation, rabroue le chercheur « professionnel de la subversion » et le renvoie au statut d'inventeur de « métier de vieille femme » (Djaout 1991).

La désacralisation du savoir

Réduit au statut des plus basses catégories, le professionnel de la science n'est plus une référence sociale enviable et le savoir cesse d'être perçu, comme il l'était durant les années 1960 et 1970, comme un facteur essentiel de distinction sociale. Alors qu'il entretenait chez les agents sociaux, comme le note Olgierd Kutý (1991:11), « une double croyance : atteindre la vérité et aller vers le progrès », il ne participe désormais plus que dans une faible mesure aux stratégies d'ascension sociale. Les catégories dominantes continuent certes à investir dans l'enseignement supérieur comme distributeurs de titres attestant la détention du savoir, mais elles le font surtout pour légitimer une position sociale déjà acquise par d'autres moyens, tout en prenant le soin de scolariser leurs enfants à l'étranger.

Parce que le champ politique exerce sa domination dans tous les domaines et à quelque niveau que l'on se place, le champ académique développe paradoxalement une plus grande proximité avec lui. L'incapacité des universitaires à puiser au sein de leur propre champ les possibilités de distinction les conduit à développer des pratiques favorisant la proximité du champ politique, indispensable pour l'accès aux positions dominantes au sein même du champ universitaire. De cette proximité naît une représentation sociale du savoir qui l'associe au pouvoir et à son pendant, la pérennité de l'ordre et du système politique. Ainsi, le « modèle culturel » qui en résulte, pour reprendre la catégorisation d'Alain Touraine, fait de l'enseignement supérieur et du savoir de manière générale, un instrument non de changement mais de stabilité rassurante pour l'ordre politique.

En marginalisant les professions scientifiques et techniques, les pouvoirs politiques ont contribué (réussi, pourrait-on dire) à « désacraliser » le savoir et par là même les institutions et les groupes sociaux qui en sont les détenteurs et les pourvoyeurs. Ce faisant, le Pouvoir s'est lui-même privé de source de légitimité scientifique et économique. Pour compenser ce déficit, il n'a plus d'autre issue qu'un retour à la « légitimité révolutionnaire ». La révolution fait alors l'objet d'un processus d'appropriation par le Pouvoir et d'exclusion de tous ceux ne sont pas partie prenante de ce Pouvoir. Ce processus, mené d'autorité, conduit naturellement à faire de nombreux « faux révolutionnaires » et à l'exclusion politique et sociale d'éminents patriotes, comme la presse en fait état quotidiennement.

Pour en faire un facteur exclusif de distinction, la révolution est réifiée et détachée des causes et de la finalité qui l'ont animé. Mystifiée et rendue en quelque sorte extérieure à la société, elle reprend, avec bien plus de forces, la place et la fonction assignées au scientisme durant les deux premières périodes. En s'appropriant la « révolution », à travers des organisations officielles qui se sont autoproclamées constitutives de la « famille révolutionnaire »⁵, le Pouvoir a exclu le reste de la société du bénéfice de cette symbolique, désormais payable en monnaies sonnantes et trébuchantes. Il en fait un facteur de distinction exclusif, une sorte de titre de noblesse héréditaire (la « famille révolutionnaire » est désormais très majoritairement constituée d'enfants de prétendus martyrs et anciens combattants) et de droit divin. Manquer de déférence à la « révolution » est ainsi passé du domaine de la « honte » au domaine de l'interdit, du « sacré » (Douglas 2005).

Conclusion

Parce que le Pouvoir, à quelque niveau que l'on se place, exclut le savoir comme moyen d'accès aux positions dominantes, celui-ci cesse d'être un facteur de distinction et de promotion, se désacralise, et l'on voit apparaître

des conduites de désaffection à l'égard de l'éducation et des quolibets populaires à l'égard des universitaires désargentés. Le processus d'autonomie des universités et des entreprises, engagé durant les deux premiers moments, a révélé des enjeux sociopolitiques et économiques pouvant mettre en péril les termes du rapport savoir-pouvoir. Socialement, la relative rationalisation des rapports sociaux et des modes d'exercice du pouvoir qui y émerge apparaît comme un contre-exemple par rapport à celle qui fonde les conditions d'exercice du Pouvoir politique; économiquement, elle apparaît comme une menace pour les nouvelles alliances politiques issues du transfert de la rente pétrolière de l'investissement vers la spéculation; politiquement, le Pouvoir n'accepte pas que des groupes sociaux, se réclamant de surcroît du savoir scientifique et technique, puissent réduire son emprise totalitaire, seule source de son pouvoir, sur la société. Ainsi, si la représentation du savoir reste instrumentale, elle a changé de sens : d'instrument de changement, elle est passé à instrument de pouvoir et donc de stabilité et d'ordre.

Les deux formes de capitaux, économiques et culturels, qui représentent les éléments de différenciation les plus efficaces dans les sociétés avancées (Bourdieu 1994) ne jouent ici qu'un rôle marginal dans la structuration du pouvoir et de l'espace social. Les agents et les groupes sont distribués dans l'espace social en fonction de leur proximité avec le Pouvoir, militaire d'abord, politique, géographique ou ethnique ensuite. Au processus initial de différenciation par le savoir et le travail s'est substitué un système de différenciation par la rente, la prébende, la force armée et la falsification de l'histoire. L'université est réduite au rôle d'outil de sujétion et ses agents ainsi assujettis, ne sont plus, comme chez Foucault, qu'émanation du Pouvoir. Subtil mélange de « traditions », de « charisme » et de « légalité » en trompe-l'œil, plus dépendant du global que du local, le Pouvoir pourrait avoir réussi dans le domaine qui lui est propre, là où le savoir a échoué dans la sienne : mettre en œuvre une approche scientifique enracinée dans la culture et la nature locales et en phase avec la science internationale.

Notes

1. Une version de cet article a été publiée en Anglais sous le titre « Higher Education and Differentiation based on Knowledge. Algeria's Aborted Dream », *In Education and the Arab 'World'. Political Projects, Struggles, and Geometries of Power*. André E. Mazawi and Ronald G. Sultana, edit., NY & London, Routledge, pp. 273-284.
2. Le discours officiel foisonne de cette expression. Le savoir est certes présenté comme un outil d'émancipation économique, mais la légitimité politique y est réservée à la qualité de « révolutionnaire ».

3. Il est clair que l'université coloniale a peu à voir avec l'université française de France.
4. Créés entre 1964 et 1973 pour former massivement dans les filières professionnalisantes de génie, des finances et du management.
5. Comprenant les organisations représentant supposément des anciens combattants, des enfants des martyrs de la guerre de libération nationale et des enfants d'anciens combattants.

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A Neglected Impediment to True Africanisation of African Higher Education Curricula: Same Agenda, Differential Fee Regimes

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Abstract

This paper focuses on various international fee regimes within African universities and aims to sensitize debates around this highly neglected issue. My primary goal is not only to challenge arbitrary policy, but also to produce a useful sociological framework capable of enabling Africans to participate in their own educational development wherever they may choose to study. This paper targets African curriculum policy-makers and stakeholders and by focusing on the differential fee regimes, it is possible to show how such policy impinges upon current discourse on the Africanisation of higher education curriculum in very complex and subtle ways. Without disregarding recent efforts, however, I want to suggest that promoting an all-inclusive higher education environment within Africa without a single unified tuition policy negates all efforts toward an African curriculum agenda. An example is drawn from the thinking of the Bologna Process and the challenges such development presents to the African continent. The paper concludes that until differential policy regimes within African tertiary institutions are included on the agenda of various efforts toward the harmonization of African higher education, the journey towards a true Africanised, decolonized and all-inclusive education curricula for Africans may remain a mirage.

Résumé

Cet article traite de divers régimes de taxes internationales au sein des universités africaines. Il vise à susciter des débats autour de ce sujet peu considéré. Mon objectif n'est pas seulement de contester une telle politique,

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mais aussi de produire un cadre sociologique qui permet aux africains de participer au développement du système éducatif là où ils ont choisi d'étudier. Ce travail s'adresse au programme des décideurs et intervenants africains. En se concentrant sur les régimes de frais différentiels, il est possible de montrer comment une telle politique empiète de manière très complexe et subtile sur les débats actuels de l'africanisation de l'enseignement supérieur. Sans mésestimer les efforts déployés récemment, je voudrais suggérer que la promotion d'un environnement « tout inclus » de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique, sans une politique de scolarité unifiée, nie tous les efforts effectués en faveur d'un programme africain. L'exemple est tiré du Processus de Bologne et des défis qu'un tel développement présente au continent africain.

Introduction

Reforming African higher education curriculum policies in the light of the concept of Africanisation appears to be at the heart of current debates and reforms issues flourishing across Africa (Nekwhevha 2000; Higgs 2003; Hahn 2005; Chetty 2006; Pityana 2006; and Serpell 2007). In this paper, I want to argue that although much has been said about higher education through various nomenclature including Africanisation, transformation and Renaissance, as yet African higher education policy-makers have however failed to forge a new identity to cope with the pressures of dissatisfaction amongst Africans. Identity as I would like to refer in this paper is such that it symbolizes unity, coherence and single purpose (Mokadi 2004). I want to argue that such a proposed African identity appears to be a wild goose chase inasmuch as the quest for educational advancement by Africans is met with the divisive and somewhat frustrating mechanisms as the international fee regimes of African higher institutions. Any attempt toward rethinking of African curriculum studies must address this much neglected aspect of Africa's educational advancement.

This paper focuses on various international fee regimes within some selected African universities; its target audience is however the African curriculum policy-makers and stakeholders in African higher education institutions. My primary goal is not only to sensitize debates around such policy arbitrary, but also to produce a useful sociological framework capable of enabling Africans to participate in their own educational development wherever they may choose to study. By focusing on the differential fee regimes, it is possible to show how arbitrary policy impinges upon the discourse on Africanisation of higher education curriculum in very complex and subtle ways. Within the framework of discourse analysis, I want to unpack an unquestioned process of institutionalized symbolic violence that poses serious threat to the call for a unified African-type curriculum framework. Without disregarding recent efforts, however, it would appear that promoting an all-inclusive higher education environment within Africa without a single unified tuition policy negates all efforts toward an African curriculum agenda. The paper concludes that until

such differential policy regimes within African tertiary institutions are revisited, the journey toward a harmonized, true Africanised, even decolonized and inclusive education curricula may remain an illusion.

Interest in the issue of international fees within African higher institutions started with my presentation at the Second African Conference on Curriculum Development in Higher Education, 16th to 18th September, 2008. In my paper titled 'A framework for curriculum policy for social cohesion in Africa', I noted that Africanisation of higher education curricula implies achieving common ground within its entire corollary, arguing that there is the need to make explicit what it is that higher institutions intend to achieve through Africanisation. In that paper (Okeke 2008), I also noted it would appear very difficult in the current state of extreme disparity within Africa's higher education policy documents to assess the extent to which the continent can claim Africanness and argued that Africanisation of higher education must be total. More over, I equally noted that if the Africanisation project is not total, touching on all aspects of Africa's higher institutions' lives, it cannot be said to be complete. My paper highlighted the need for all Africa's higher education policy-makers to begin some serious consideration over such discriminatory tendencies within African universities with particular reference to pedagogical languages and tuition fees. This paper, which now focuses more deeply on the issue of international tuition fees imposed on African students by African universities, is a continuation of that discussion.

Continuing my argument therefore, this paper raises three questions that seriously challenge expert efforts toward African-type education curricula.

- First, why are institutions in Africa operating differential fee structures for different categories of students who study within same institutional pedagogical agenda?
- Second, what justifications appear to be laid down for foreign students for the somewhat exorbitant international fee structures; same course content, same assessment, same infrastructure, yet differential fee regimes?
- And finally, what is it that African educational institutions stand to lose if a unified tuition policy is established for both foreign and local students?

To address these questions, attention is drawn to the lessons from the Bologna Process (Bishop 2006; Papatsiba 2006; Sall & Ndjaye 2007). But before I do that, let me throw more light on the two concepts of Africanisation and African International Fee Policies (AIFS).

Africanisation and the African International Fee Status

One of the surest signs of a declining relationship is the absence of complaints. In contrast, the rising voices of Africans and academics alike are a good sign defining the African resolve for strength in unity. Such appears to be the driving

force informing all debates, meetings, conferences, seminars, symposia and workshops in most Africa's institutions of higher learning. According to Mazrui (2009) an African patriot should not allow despair to take over although things might look terrible at the moment. Professor Mazrui noted that if one is an African academic, she/he must endeavour to try and make contributions in his/her special field and try to see better times ahead. To me, that is why various Africans have risen to the challenges of a globalizing nature engulfing Africa at the moment. Such is also the impetus on which I draw; hoping as it were that my contribution would assist Africa in her efforts toward some worthwhile steps forward. This is therefore no time for sloganeering; rather the time is ripe when 'African universities should pay particular attention to the present international context...' (Sall & Ndjaye 2007:52).

The concept of Africanisation directs our attention to the fact that things are not going the way they should within the African educational, economic, political, and social lives. Africanisation demands a re-narration of the African existence. It is a call to all well-meaning Africans, but also to all institutions with a mandate aimed at the training of the mind, to the fact that now is the time to change our world in reflection of ourselves. Naude & Naude (2005) refer to the concept of Africanisation as an ideology highlighting the need for an education programme that must be inherently inclusive. This is of course true because any attempt towards curriculum rethinking in Africa must confront issue of policy diversity within Africa's institutions of higher learning as this appears to be at the heart of Africanisation. That equally appears to be what Naude and Naude (2005:74) meant when they said 'cultural justice is indeed a crucial dimension of the Africanisation of higher education'. Again the concept of Africanisation reminds Africans that something is missing, however, 'it should not be necessary for Africans to have to declare their Africanness; for institutions to declare their intention to Africanise; or for higher education to be constantly confronted with the need to transform' (Mokadi 2004:1).

For Africanisation to achieve its set goals it is imperative for African institutions and Africans themselves to invigorate that spirit of love and care defined through Ubuntu: 'the humanistic spirit which more clearly defines the morality of the various peoples of Africa' (Nekwhevha 2000:22; see also Broodryk 2006; Msila 2008:69). To me, the philosophy informing the Africanisation project does not deny Africans their citizenship or national autonomy, for we are by birth or by naturalization or by any other means Africans and politically independent. What the whole project demands is for various institutions that define our very existence as Africans to initiate some modes of consciousness because '...the reality of our situation is that as African universities, whether we like it or not, it is our responsibility to find solutions to the myriad of problems besetting our badly under-developed continent'

(Mokadi 2007: 2; see also Magagula & Mazibuko 2004; Mavhunga 2006). This is no time for sloganeering; the time is ripe for Africans and African institutions to take advantage of the rising African voices of great repute coming from various institutions within Africa and begin to initiate a genuine platform for real transformation.

Africanisation demands that all African higher education policy-makers to begin to seriously consider such discriminatory and divisive policies as the international tuition fees status for Africa citizens. Again, educational policy researchers are challenged by this author, to begin as a matter of urgency to provide answers to what African universities stand to lose if a unified tuition fees policy applies to all students of the African Union origin as is the case with our European counterpart. This is because Africanisation, of higher education curricula implies achieving common grounds. Otherwise one would argue that although 'colonialism in Africa provided the framework for the organised subjugation of the cultural, scientific and economic life of many on the African continent' (Higgs 2003:6), it would seem such an inherited subjugation mechanism lives on, resonating through such policy as the discriminatory international fee regime. This is one aspect of the colonial legacies all well-meaning Africans must rise against. Such differential fee-policy regimes pose serious threats to the whole idea of Africanisation but also to all efforts toward African higher education quality assurance as well as the harmonization campaigns currently going-on.

By the African International Fee Status (AIFS), I mean the policy whereby universities and other institutions of higher learning within Africa differentiate between the fees paid by students originating from within the geographical region or country where the institutions are located and other students coming from the outside of that region. For instance, various universities across the African continent have established differential policies on tuition fees and other fees paid by both home and foreign students. Whereas within the European universities, the status 'international students' refers to all students from outside of the European Union (EU), in Africa the same status refers to all students from outside a particular country where the university is located. While this situation may pose very serious implications for African efforts toward harmonization of African universities' programmes as well as for quality assurance, it however, raises fundamental questions over the whole concept of African Union and its credibility. With the exception of South Africa, which 'has already decided to treat SADC students as home students and treating them equally with regard to fees and accommodation' (Hahn 2005: 22), to the extent that this author has reviewed (see for example, United Nations 2001; AU 2007; Shabani 2004; Sall & Ndjaye 2007; AU 2008; AU/NEPAD 2009; AAU 2009; UNESCO/ADEA 2009) no known policy on unified tuition fee for

members of the African Union has been recorded any where or is even being discussed at any level.

While it is doubtful how African universities intend to achieve unity in diversity, quality assurance and harmonization under such a differential fee policy climate, it is however imperative for African universities and the African Union (AU) to begin as a matter of urgency, consideration of the issue being discussed in this paper; this is a necessary condition as Africa grapples with the pressures of globalization. However, it seems that Africa's educational policy-makers are contented with sloganeering, and all efforts toward harmonization and quality assurance are wasteful if they decide to turn a blind eye to the AIFS policies within African universities. More so, experience has shown that how university students source funds as well as finance their academic programmes impacts on their approach to learning. The implications are also manifold, impinging on quality, level of commitment, conscience and as well as on the feeling of patriotism on the part of such individuals. More over, while this practice may impact on the overall sense of commitment amongst its African victims, African institutions must begin to cultivate the habit 'to share good practice and practical examples of what has worked. We need to build a consensus of agreed principles and elements which form the essence of what we mean by, and expect of transformation' (Mokadi 2004:1). It can be argued that 'African universities could be inspired by present experiments in Europe' (Sall & Ndjaye 2007:50), and on this note, I turn attention to the lessons of the Bologna Process.

What lessons from the Bologna Process and European student mobility?

The necessity, successes and failures of the Bologna Process are well documented in the literature on world educational developments (see Zgaga 2003; Lunt 2005; Bishop 2006; Papatsiba 2006; Sall & Ndjaye 2007; AU 2008; Yavaprabhas 2008; Sheppard & Bellis 2008; Yavaprabhas & Nopraenu 2008). In 1999 some 29 European Ministers of Education and representatives of higher education institutions gathered in Bologna, Italy and agreed to embark on the structural reformation of higher education in Europe. It must be noted that this number has since enlarged to about 45 European States (see Bishop 2006). The aim of the proposal was to work toward achieving the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by the year 2010. This agreement, which was signed on the 19th of June, 1999 heralded what is today referred to as the Bologna Process. It is 'an attempt to coordinate responses to major challenges facing European Higher Education through a package of structural reforms' (Lunt 2005:89). While this author is aware of various criticisms of the Bologna Process, it is however, important to note that '... the BP is said to be one of the most profound changes encountered by European Higher Education' (Papatsiba 2006:96).

The objectives of the Bologna Process are very many and well documented in literature. They include the following:

- easily readable and comparable degrees;
- uniform degree structure – a three-cycle framework (3 - 2 - 3);
- the establishment of a system of credits with the objective of establishing a system of credits to promote widespread student mobility;
- increased mobility so that obstacles to the effective mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff will be removed;
- the promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies; and
- the promotion of the European dimension in higher education with closer international co-operation and networks; language and cultural education (Bishop 2006:4).

Of these objectives, it is the increased student mobility which has direct import on the focus of this paper, more so, because of the need to demonstrate how such a unified policy could help improve the lot of students. Although the BP is not without criticisms, it however ‘expresses the conviction of many European countries and many academic institutions ... to continually improve the quality of their education, to ease student mobility, and to assist young people in obtaining mutually recognized qualifications’ (Zgaga 2003:251).

It must be noted that the Bologna Process has inspired a number of moves toward the restructuring of higher education in other regions, for example, in the Latin America, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia as well as the Arab countries (see Yavaprabhas 2008; Yavaprabhas & Nopraenue 2008). It is therefore important for African higher education experts and policy-makers to begin to assess the implications of the BP on the internal arrangements of higher education processes within the African continent. This suggestion appears plausible for Africa as the BP ‘seems likely to have a profound effect on the development of higher education globally as... other continents are taking a close interest in the reform process and beginning to consider how their own systems can be more closely aligned with Bologna thinking’ (Bishop 2006:3). In addition to the above, there is a growing feeling across Africa that the continent could benefit immensely from such cooperative mechanisms as the BP. For instance Sall & Ndjaye (2007:52) argued that ‘African inter-academic cooperation can be boosted if it is inspired by cooperation models existing in the European academic space’. Delegates to the Accra, Ghana Validation Meeting for African Quality Rating Mechanism were up on their feet when ‘... participants recommended that higher education in Africa would benefit from the adoption of the Bologna Process, especially in fostering regional collaboration’ (African Union 2008:55; see also Shabani 2004). It is worth noting that although the African Union

acknowledges the cultural and material differences between the African and the European continents, the organization does however believe ‘... it is advisable for the African Union to pursue its own African harmonization process, drawing on the lessons learned in Europe...’ (African Union 2008:56).

To me, Africa can not afford to turn a blind eye to these global educational cooperative developments; if she does, it could affect Africa’s educational relationships with the rest of the world in more ways than one. I am aware of various moves at the continental level, for instance, the mandate to the Association of African Universities (AAU) to work out the modalities for, and as well as launching the move toward the establishment of the African Higher Education Area (AHEA), see for example, United Nations (2001); AU/NEPAD (2008); Yavaprabhas & Nopraenue (2008); AAU (2009). It is however doubtful how the enormous task of establishing the AHEA could be achieved given the present incompatible, highly divisive and uncompromising national educational policies amongst African nation-states. The task is made even more complex given that the African Union exists more on paper than in reality, so that unlike the European Union, it has failed to create any genuine framework aimed at ‘the promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement’ (Sheppard & Bellis 2008:3).

It must, however, be noted that prior to the launching the BP, the EU zone comprising 26 countries was already in place (Bishop 2006), with full implications for classified EU students in relation to geographical mobility and fee status. By the year 2010, it is expected that the full principles of the Bologna Process would be practically and operationally in place (Papatsiba 2006). Having said that, I want to see an attractive African higher education capable of competing within a speedily globalizing world, through some laid down mechanism of progressive structural harmonization of African higher education systems; a mechanism that would guarantee a comprehensive and unified policy for the mobility of African citizens wherever they may wish to study within Africa. This is imperative because as Papatsiba (2006:100) noted ‘...integration can not operate in a vacuum, but would depend on the existence of people having capacities to operate beyond the national and cultural borders’. However, it is important to mention at this point that no call has been made in this paper for Africa to adopt the BP principles as blueprint for the reformation of African higher education. African higher education must necessarily be reformed from within Africa, a view equally shared by Mokadi (2004). That notwithstanding, it must be said that if Africa fails to respond genuinely to these global inevitabilities, all efforts particularly toward the harmonization of higher education programmes (see for instance Hahn 2005; African Union 2007; 2008); and

that of African quality rating mechanism (see also African Union, 2008; AAU, 2009), will be unproductive.

It must be noted that at the London Summit in 2007, European student mobility was designated as a key priority for the Bologna Process (Sheppard & Bellis 2008). Earlier, Bishop (2006:10) suggested that a 'probable outcome of the Bologna Process is that the costs to students of international mobility within Europe will be reduced relative to those studying outside Europe...' Generally, the benefits of mobility as embedded in the Bologna Process for European students are many and they include but are not limited to the following:

- the acquisition of international competences such as a good command of language;
- a certain level of intercultural competence;
- personal competences such as autonomy, initiative, and resilience;
- mobility represents a form of secondary socialization that relies on individuals. Being mobile implies experiences of changing environments, even one's sense of belonging, and increases the possibilities of benefiting from variety;
- mobility involves encounters and confrontation with differences, requiring a broad range of individual adaptive responses, and also encouraging their renewal, and
- hence, mobility would maintain individuals in a state of awakening akin to the acquisition of new competences and new knowledge (Papatsiba 2006:99).

I do not think anything is wrong with individuals or nations developing the habit of borrowing from good practice wherever such practice is found to be working. Mokadi (2004:1) agrees that 'we need to share good practice and practical examples of what has worked'. But I think a good start is for African institutions and policy-makers, and even politicians to abhor and reject the habit of sloganeering which appear to be clogging the wheels of positive intent. For example, African higher education summits are always climaxed with such slogans as 'harmonization, borderless education, transnational education, cross-border education and quality assurance', without any real commitment either at the institutional or governmental levels. Africa can benefit from her numerous diversities and colonial past because as argued by Papatsiba (2006:93) '...reforms do not take place in a vacuum, but against the background of diverse inherited systems'. The rest of this paper will try to demonstrate how differential fee policies within African higher education have continued to serve as serious constraints to true Africanisation of Africa's higher education sector.

Implications for the Africanisation project

African universities operate a tuition policy that seeks to distinguish between local and international students – a legacy of colonial education policies in Africa. Whereas across the Atlantic, say in Europe, the phrase ‘international student’ is used to differentiate between the student from within the EU and others from outside of the EU (note that the BP has laid the framework for harmonizing existing differences between members of the EU zone and other European countries by 2010). The African conception of the phrase appears to be different. A student who is classified an ‘international student’ at an African university, is one who does not hold any of the elements of citizenship as defined by the immigration law of the country where the university is located. Such is not peculiar to any one country or region within Africa, but appear to be an unquestioned practice throughout the entire continent.

So why are African universities charging different fees to students who study for, same degree, as for instance, in BSc Engineering, to mention just one? Is there any justification for such a fee structure in a university, which has same academic staff, same course content, same assessment, and same infrastructure for students of different African nationals? More so, is there truly anything an African university stands to lose if a unified tuition policy is established for both foreign and local students? It must be noted that although the African Union developed in response to the EU, in practice no such thing as AU does exist for African students. This suggests that it is not always true to argue as did Nekwhevha (2000:20) that ‘... current African educational policies have been coined along European lines...’ since one may ask what is it that has prevented tuition fee policies in Africa to be framed along the EU fee policy frames.

It has been suggested that ‘Africa should look towards the Bologna Process as a model to adopt in seeking to harmonize higher education in the region...’ (African Union 2008:55). However, I think it would be inappropriate to apply the developmental processes of the advanced West as a yardstick to assess the badly underdeveloped educational economy of the African continent. That notwithstanding, I want to argue that all efforts towards harmonization of African higher education would be futile if African universities and governments refuse to develop the habit of good practice. We could still be Africans while adopting the good practices of other regions of the world in an attempt to forge a compatible approach towards the positioning of Africa’s higher education to be able to compete with other continents within a rapidly globalizing world. Moreover, the reason why we share the concern for our badly managed higher education, is because we are Africans, so we do not require of anyone to remind us all of this inalienable truth about our Africanness. What is required of Africa therefore, is for her institutions of higher learning to show more commitment toward finding solutions to the educational problems that beset

Africa; and ‘the reality of our situation is that as African universities ... we are expected to provide solutions: we have been empowered through our hard-earned education to be able to do so’ (Mokadi 2004:2).

The above point to me appears to be at the heart of recent efforts including various seminars, symposia, conferences aimed at the harmonization of Africa’s higher education. But it would be unhelpful if Africans are selective in their handling of various issues that beset Africa’s higher education. What affects African students could have direct implications on issues such as harmonization and quality assurance. More over, how African students source funds for their higher education enterprise, would invariably impact on the issues of quality assurance. It would appear very difficult, too, for African higher education to guarantee quality in the face of differential access and control over funding. African universities would certainly lose nothing by adopting a unified fee policy for every African studying within a given African geographical entity. In my few years as a university lecturer, I do not recall offering any foreign student in my class lectures different from that which I offered to the locals in terms of content, depth, attention, or assessment, neither do I recall being overburdened by any student by the simple reason that he/she is classified ‘international student’.

So from a personal perspective, it would be very tedious to differentiate my academic and pastoral services to the different categories of students that I encounter in my everyday dealings with the students, as no such difference exists to start with. Institutions in Africa would equally lose nothing if they decide as a matter of policy to introduce a unified tuition and other fees structure for all Africans. Collectively therefore, African universities have no justifiable rationale for the differential fee regimes for Africans studying within African universities. Such policy segregates Africans within their own institutions; it is a continuation of aspect of the colonial legacies our forefathers fought very hard to uproot. Most importantly, such practice negates all principles of the African philosophy in ‘...welfare concern, where the basis of communalism is giving priority to the community and respect for the person. It also involves sharing with and helping persons’ (Higgs 2003:14); such practice also contradicts the spirit of Ubuntu and Africanisation.

My paper aims to sensitize debates around the much-neglected issue of African International Fee Status within African institutions of higher learning. Leaving aside such an important issue would inescapably thwart the objectives of the supposedly progressive wheels of efforts as the Harmonization of Higher Education Programme in Africa: A strategy for the African Union (African Union 2007); Validation Meeting for African Quality Rating Mechanism and Harmonization Strategy for Higher Education (African Union 2008); the AU/NEPAD African Action Plan: 10th Africa Partnership Forum (AU/NEPAD 2008);

or the Dodowa Declaration on African Quality Assurance Network (AAU 2009). As it is, none of the above mentioned forum has ever had on its agenda for consideration the issue of African international tuition fees. Such a blatant omission of an important issue as the fee status of Africans studying in African higher institutions located outside of their geographical region, raises fundamental questions on the whole project of Africanisation.

Conclusion

The issue discussed in this paper is not an idle one; it calls for urgent and decisive action from every patriotic African. According to Waghid (2004:132) 'what makes dialogue a conversation is that people are willing to listen to what they have to say to one another without ... dismissing their subjective views as not worthy of consideration'. It is therefore my argument that until Africans begin to pay attention to the issue discussed in this paper, the journey towards a true Africanised, even decolonized and all inclusive education curricula may remain a mirage. While suggestion is made in this paper for Africans to develop the habit of adopting good practice wherever it is demonstrated to be working, by which the betterment of Africa is made a priority, this author is however not in support of any call for Africans to seek solutions to Africa's problems from outside of the shores of Africa.

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The Academy and its Disengagement from Popular Struggles in Kenya¹

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Abstract

This is a study of the academy and its disengagement from popular struggles in Kenya. Focusing attention on the role of faculty unions and student associations, the study identifies and describes the trajectory of engagement and concludes that the current conjuncture tends more towards disengagement from popular struggles by unions and associations, many of which are consumed by daily struggles for staff and student welfare and nothing else. Thus the pattern has moved from active participation in popular struggles against authoritarian one-party rule to the current phase in which the terrain of higher education is at a crossroads. Academics and students remain disengaged from everyday political struggles in society and the possibilities of a re-composition of the student movement and faculty union are many. The study explains why the potential for greater involvement of universities as change agents in the diverse struggles for social justice remain under-utilised.

Résumé

Cet article traite de l'université et de son désengagement des luttes populaires qu'elle menait dans le passé au Kenya. En mettant l'accent sur la situation des professeurs et des associations estudiantines, l'auteur identifie et décrit la trajectoire des luttes syndicales et sociales. Il conclut que la conjoncture actuelle tend davantage vers le désengagement de luttes populaires, tant beaucoup de syndicats et d'associations se sont épuisés dans des luttes ordinaires au quotidien. Ainsi, le modèle a évolué d'une participation active dans la lutte contre les régimes autoritaires du Parti Unique vers une période durant laquelle l'enseignement supérieur se retrouve au carrefour de

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l'incertitude. Des universitaires et des étudiants restent éloignés des luttes politiques quotidiennes même si les possibilités d'une recombinaison du mouvement étudiant et syndical existent. L'étude explique pourquoi la mobilisation des universités, en tant qu'agents de changement, demeure faible dans les diverses luttes sociales.

Introduction

In this article, the academy refers generally to tertiary institutions of learning including universities and polytechnics. But given the history of political engagements between tertiary education institutions and the state in Kenya, the study zeroes more specifically on the story of universities as sites of political and popular struggle. The trajectory of engagement described here has a clear pattern that has tended more towards disengagement from popular struggles in the last three decades. The pattern has moved from active participation in popular struggles against authoritarian one-party rule to the current phase in which the terrain of higher education is at a crossroads and academics and students remain disengaged from everyday political struggles in society. The possibilities of a re-composition of the student movement and faculty union are many. I describe the history and dynamics involved in this process and explain why the potential for greater involvement of universities as change agents in the diverse struggles for social justice remain underutilised.

Student politics and struggles are organised around associations while faculty have coalesced around staff unions. These are new or resuscitated organizations and do not seem to anchor their pursuits in any popular struggles. In fact, they seem disengaged from these struggles and are unable internally to defend and enjoy the democratic gains evident in the larger Kenyan society. The associations and unions lack a serious ideological base around which to galvanise, mobilise and anchor any social struggles. Their organisational capacities are bureaucratised, weak and susceptible to manipulation from university administration and university management has exploited this with alacrity. Similarly, their activities are few and restricted to advancing the interests of their petty bourgeois class location. They enjoy different levels of acceptance and recognition by university management, the state and within society. In some way, this bureaucratisation and recognition has acted to depoliticise the associations and unions and to render them mere vehicles of struggle for better remuneration and working conditions.

As a result, there is little the associations and unions can do to advance popular struggles for social justice in society in general. Few are the academics who fit the definition of public intellectuals and their engagement in forums for public debate is miniscule. On the contrary, they are engaged in an all-consuming

struggle against reactionary university administrations. Much of this struggle rotates around staff welfare issues. This is understandable given that universities have been unable to 'integrate staff welfare in the universities transformation process' (Munene 2008:10).² Most university administrations seem wedded to older habits of the one-party authoritarian era in which staff welfare did not matter and was considered mainly as a last minute token by the state or university administration. The struggle for better working terms however favours the administration. In any case, Kenyan society seems to be democratising much faster than universities. This reality has prevented universities from being effective interlocutors in the national dialogue on social justice and political reforms. With most of their energies consumed by internal struggles for academic freedom (this is never linked to the broader national struggle) and staff/student welfare, their vanguard role in leading the process of transformation is limited to occasional strike action and students riots.

Intellectual Roles Clarified

Kenyan higher education scene is dominated by public universities. In terms of political and civic engagement, public universities have greater visibility in national discourse than private ones. The same applies to student activism. Perhaps because of their background and history, faculty and students in public universities have historically shown greater interest in national affairs than private university students. They repeatedly mount protests, issue press statements and actively challenge the state on matters they feel strongly about. In contrast, private university students have a laid-back approach and rarely feature in public struggles. Consequently, a public discourse has developed that credits private university students for their 'maturity' and 'reason' in contrast to their public university counterparts. Little is however said about the class profile of private university students and how this might incline them to be distant from pressing national struggles. In any case, private universities are fee paying institutions and ability to pay counts as an important criterion for admission. Their fees are generally higher than those of public universities and, as such, they disproportionately attract students from a particular class of Kenyans whose interest in issues of social justice is, on balance, minimal.³

Thus, up to the early 1990s, the struggle for social justice and political reforms has found greater resonance within public universities and among its students and faculty. As institutions and individuals with a stake in the national project, the actions and involvement of public universities accords very well with the historical mission associated with universities as sites of knowledge and struggle. However, a distinction must be acknowledged between the institution and the individual. It is the commitment of the individual intellectual independent of the university as an institution that made/makes the struggles

for democracy vibrant. Universities are important but also incidental to the struggle. Indeed, universities quite often stultify thought and curtail social action (Adar 1999:193-94). It is the conviction and drive of individual lecturers/intellectuals rather than the university as an institution that give depth to the public engagements of intellectuals. In more recent times, universities have lost that cadre of students and lecturers who mobilised to democratise the university and society. Many of these intellectuals joined the emergent civil society while others became politicians. The result is the disengagement of the academy from popular struggles and the spectacle of society democratising faster than its universities.

The figure of the intellectual is therefore important to whatever role universities play in transforming society. Edward Said adroitly captured this argument. He emphasized 'the figure or image' of the intellectual arguing that 'an intellectual is an individual with a specific public role in society that cannot be reduced simply to being a faceless professional, a competent member of a class just going about his/her business'. For Said, an intellectual 'is endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public'. An intellectual raises 'embarrassing questions', 'confront[s] orthodoxy and dogma' and is 'someone who cannot easily be co-opted by government or corporations and whose *raison d'être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug' (Said 1994:11). Said draws an explicit relationship between the stature of the intellectual and their ability to speak truth to power.

The capacity to speak truth to power is contingent upon the stature of the intellectual even though the standing that comes with academic achievement can also entrench status quo tendencies. The accomplishments of an intellectual in research, publishing and critical thinking add value and weight to what they publicly stand for and articulate. Intellectuals do not peddle rumours or gossip; they articulate ideas whose veracity they have established and that they know to be based on sound thought. The modes of articulation of intellectual knowledge vary; they include publications, conferences, television appearances, consultancy and expert advice. Intellectual standing is legitimised by expertise in research and dissemination and an understanding of the many sidedness of an issue. It is in this sense that Ali Mazrui's definition of an intellectual as someone 'who has the capacity to be fascinated by ideas and has acquired the skill to handle many of them effectively' is apt (Mazrui 1978).

Three Phases of Intellectuals Political Engagement

There have been three major phases of (dis)engagement between intellectuals and the state or other status quo entities/forces in society. The first, 'the age of euphoria', sprang from the heady days of independence when intellectuals

shared in the same nation-building project as politicians and actively sought to serve towards the realisation of this project. The second was the period of 'troubled relationship'⁴ when authoritarian rule took root and intellectuals were among the social classes in society pilloried for being irrelevant and hounded for holding, writing and articulating views construed to be anti-government or against the status quo. Finally is the recent period of political reforms when basic freedoms of expression are guaranteed. Of these three periods, the first two are already too well studied. We recapitulate only to tease out their relevance to the third period which is of greater importance for our purposes.

Age of Euphoric Nationalism

African nationalism was primarily led by intellectuals. Some of them became the founding fathers (rarely mothers) of independent African states. Their names occupy exalted positions of state and a good number have been described as philosopher-kings. In Kenya, such leading thinkers include Oginga Odinga and Tom Mboya even though others like Dr Julius G. Kiano occupied key positions in government. It was in the hands of these leaders that policy on higher education and the role of universities was formulated. They acknowledged the value of higher education and supported increased student admission. They needed trained people for the Africanization programme and for nation-building. As a result, the immediate task of universities was human capital formation and deployment.

As long as universities fulfilled the task of human capital formation and deployment, they enjoyed a cosy relationship with government and state officials. Many of the graduates looked forward to employment in government and had no problem with this cordial relationship. Students at the time remained largely 'apolitical' and content to 'pursue their studies with little active attention to the political world' (Savage and Taylor 1991:311; Klopp and Orina 2002:48). Intellectuals also exhibited similar tendencies. At the time, the interests and priorities of intellectuals and national leaders converged. The anti-colonial struggle had forged for them common enemies and interests. Indeed, a number of intellectuals had either taught these leaders or had shared school/college and became partisans in the nationalist movement (Ajayi et al. 1996). Though they were a minority at the university at the time, African academics left the predominantly expatriate staff to defend university autonomy. Most local intellectuals did not anticipate the serious problems posed by the close affinity of university and government. While government felt obligated to finance university education almost to a cent, it also knew this to be an easy way of extracting acquiescence from intellectuals.

Intellectual debates at the time were vigorous but cordial. Politicians took space in intellectual forums to articulate and defend their ideas. For instance,

Tom Mboya and Oginga Odinga took advantage of this to elucidate their philosophies, articulate their developmental convictions and engage intellectuals in the then Uganda-based *Transition* and also in the *East African Journal*. The debate around the Sessional Paper No 10 of 1965 on *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya* is a good example (Republic of Kenya 1965; Ghai 1965:20-23). It was in the context of these debates that Tom Mboya set the tone for universities. He rejected the view of universities as focusing 'constructive criticism of government policies' and warned of the risk of the academy 'organizing itself into a continuing opposition'. He insisted that universities must be 'founded on a basic sympathy with the national movement' and implied that academic freedom has limits. Such limits, he explained, require universities to be 'attuned to the national mood if they are to be appreciated by the people' (Mboya 1963:104-105). The argument was prophetic.

The Period of Troubled Relationship

The year 1969 marked a decisive turning point in the cordial relationship between the state and universities. First, Kenyan politics changed dramatically with the falling out between Odinga Odinga and Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. The falling out created a formal political opposition and the academy almost naturally aligned itself with this side. Mboya had warned against the university lecturers deliberately constituting 'themselves into groups which are intended to oppose government'. Soon enough, intellectuals were at the receiving end of government power as they were perceived to be in the opposition. Students began to take an active interest in politics and opposed the move towards one party rule that KANU had carefully choreographed.

This marked a turning moment in the state-university relations. In 1969, government denied Odinga the opportunity to speak at the University of Nairobi (UoN). Students protested against this move. The government instituted strong arm tactics not only to contain the rising opposition within KANU, but also to prevent the coalescing of forces that would constitute organized opposition. Preventing the emergence of an effective and organised opposition, Tamarkin (1978:300-301) has argued, in part explains the enduring 'stability' of the Kenyatta regime. But while the Kenyatta government effectively curtailed freedoms in the larger society, it was unable to fully silence the university. Thus, this opposition to government 'relocated into universities and the university student political institutions became the structures through which these battles were fought' (Rok Ajulu as cited in Klopp and Orina 2002:49).

Government responded by intensifying surveillance of university students and lecturers. It used suspensions, expulsion and detention to silence both faculty and students. Periodic closures of universities whenever students protested became a tool in the government arsenal of repression. Those identified

as leaders of student activism were regularly expelled as a lesson to others, perhaps in order to extract silence, complicity and compliance. Whenever universities were closed due to protests, students were required to report weekly to their village chiefs for that entire period. For lecturers, detention and subsequent loss of jobs was used to ensure their compliance. Abdulatif Abdulla had been the first writer to be imprisoned for three years for writing and circulating a pamphlet titled *Kenya: Where are We Heading to?* These tactics however failed to produce silent acquiescence; they instead provoked more progressive literature and intensified student activism. In fact, prison became a fertile ground for authors like Abdulatif Abdulla and later Ngugi wa Thiong'o to write (wa Thiong'o, 1993:94).⁵

Daniel arap Moi took over power in 1978 and state authoritarianism took a turn for worse. He solidified the strong arm tactics built under the Kenyatta regime and sought to undermine even the basic mission of universities as sites of knowledge production. One means by which this was achieved was through the centralised administrative structure at the university. With the president as Chancellor, Moi used the powers of appointing key university administrators to install a structure of university management that matched in design and intent that of the provincial administration. He remained the titular Chancellor of all public universities and appointed all the Vice Chancellors (VCs). The VCs in turn influenced the appointment of the university council including the chairman of council. The VC influenced the appointment of three deputies, the registrars, finance officers, and principals of colleges. S/he then appointed chairpersons of departments and the dean of students.

The scope for academic freedom was, as a consequence, circumscribed by the role assumed by the VCs. The Senate, the highest decision making body on academic matters, was compromised through the actions of VCs. In more recent times in some universities, VCs have further enlarged the scope of patronage and subservience by packing such bodies as Senate with their appointees. In the 1990s, William Ochieng', a former Principal of Maseno University College, observed that 'Senates are themselves undemocratic bodies since they are packed by heads of departments and institutes who are mere appointees of the vice-Chancellors' (Ochieng as cited in Adar 1999:193). In the more recent times, the situation has grown worse.

There are notable examples of how things have grown worse. VCs have created a category of management academics that is distinct from classroom academics. For instance, VCs continue to unilaterally set up new directorates to which they appoint as Directors only those academics who uncritically support them. The idea is to enlarge the scope of patronage and to facilitate unquestioning loyalty, management has discouraged or undermined existence of elective positions in the university structures.⁶ Appointees to administrative

positions earn generous allowances, something that ensures the sycophancy that management needs. In most cases, appointees are young academics some without their Ph.Ds. Through such manoeuvres, some VCs have silenced the professoriate in the guise that they belong to management. Indeed, at Kenyatta University for example, management required all appointees to administrative positions to cease being members of the University Academic Staff Union (UASU). The result is that the Senate has been expanded into an administrative appendage of management not an academic organ of the university. All these have contributed to disengaging the academic as an agent for popular struggles as most academics resort to individual pursuits.

In order to deal with organized faculty and student activism, the faculty union and student association were targeted and banned. Under Moi, student leaders were either patronised or harassed into acquiescing to administrative dictates. In extreme cases, they were expelled from the university on trumped up charges on flimsy grounds. Further, university management sought to influence student elections in order to have student leaders who were partial to the ruling party. This happened in the UoN with the unopposed election of pro-government students like PLO Lumumba. In recent times, management interference with elections of student associations continues, leading, for instance, to student riots in Kenyatta University (KU) in March 2009 and UoN in June 2010. During his presidency, Moi took the game of infiltrating the student union to new heights. He encouraged the establishment of District-based student and faculty associations. Formed on the basis of the Districts from which students/faculty originated, these associations were in turn patronised by leading politicians from those Districts. While occasionally, these Associations played a useful welfare role of raising funds to pay fees for needy students, etc., they were designed to facilitate a divide and rule strategy of counterbalancing the umbrella student/faculty association. Furthermore, these associations became bases for politicians to organize for expedient political gain.

During Moi's presidency, the relations between students and faculty on one hand and the state on the other hand deteriorated to an all time low. The state security apparatuses infiltrated every nook and cranny of the university and reported on lecturers and students. These were periodically picked up for one flimsy reason or the other and detained. Moi had callous disrespect for the core mission of the university and he responded badly to issues about faculty and student welfare. Fearing organized reaction from university students, he spoke derisively of the academic staff union and student association. Remuneration for academic staff hit an all time low under his rule. Many lecturers had to flee the country into exile after harassment and persecution from the state security apparatuses. For some like Elisha Atieno-Odhiambo, the stint in detention and subsequent exile took a personal toll leading him to declare at a

Historical Association of Kenya Conference at Lake Baringo Lodge in 2004 that his ultimate loyalty was with the Luo nation/ethnicity. If during Kenyatta's rule the seminar culture continued in muted forms, under Moi, this culture which had been the forum for critical analysis of society all but died. Moi even took it upon himself to occasionally declare debates closed as he did with the Mau Mau debate in the 1980s. With the rise in the number of universities and university students, the decline in government expenditure and investment in universities and the brain drain, quality in academic standards all but plummeted. There remained few isolated islands of excellence whose contribution continues to be underestimated to date.

If the basis of effective organising against a repressive regime depended on the existence of a critical mass of accomplished scholars, this threshold became elusive during the Moi presidency and has grown worse as many of these academics joined politics or relocated into the emergent civil society. This was demonstrated during the 1994 strike action when university lecturers went on strike to demand registration of the University Academic Staff Union. This was the last major faculty strike action that bore resemblance to an effective social action for justice. While in universities with a large cohort of senior lecturers and professors, the strike action undermined the teaching programme and drove home the demand for freedom of expression and the need to improve staff welfare, in others like KU, the then VC manipulated lecturers and defeated the noble intentions of the striking faculty. A section of the faculty, operating under a group of unnamed '100 Academics' congregated together in a move to defeat the strike. Where necessary, junior lecturers of the rank of graduate assistants and non-teaching staff were deployed to teach or administer examinations.

The defeat of the strike action through crude and unprofessional means had a predictable effect on staff morale and quality of teaching programmes. Many accomplished and politically active intellectuals were either fired from their job or took up other job opportunities. Some relocated to universities abroad, into the private sector or to civil society. Dr Korwa Adar, the chairman of the proposed Union was fired from UoN and relocated to South Africa while Kilemi Mwiria the Secretary-General was fired and was later elected Member of Parliament. He is currently Assistant Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology. With a booming consultancy culture in Kenya, many lecturers took to consultancy work with its unedifying intellectual culture. If the value of intellectual work rests in the 'collective labour of the mind', as Mkandawire (2005) puts it, the net effect of the disruptive years of the Moi regime was to fragment the intellectual community, atomise the knowledge they produced and demoralise the staff and students.

The Era of Reform: Fragmentation and Atomisation

The desire to put local public universities on the international map was further eroded by the economic situation in the country in the 1980s and 1990s. This was the time when higher education was assaulted by the combined force of World Bank/IMF austerity measures and the continuing authoritarianism of the government/university management. The austerity measures had a very absurd logic: they demanded that education be treated like any other investment – ‘foolish to make unless the returns are profitable’ (Mamdani 1994:3). Profitable returns were measured in quantitative terms thus, obscuring other spin-off gains that were not quantifiable, but whose value to a knowledge society is well-known. From this argument, the conclusion that the rates of returns on basic education outweighed those of higher education inevitably followed. The verdict communicated in a World Bank blueprint revealed at a meeting of African VCs held in Harare in 1986 was that Africa did not in fact need her universities (Imam and Mama 1994:73).

The reform era sanctioned an unhealthy assault on the university and intellectuals. Posed largely as a necessary reaction to the decay of higher education, this reform process undermined university education and the potential for mobilising the academy as a site of struggle for change and intellectuals as agents in the process. What passed as reform exposed universities to a market driven logic. Keen observers of the sector have concluded that the reforms and reform process at issue ‘can neither redress nor significantly change the current directions and conditions of [Africa’s] higher education system’. What passed as reform, Aina argues, entailed ‘managerial and technocratic tinkering and modification of formal policies, practices and structures...’, and did not address broader issues ‘of vision, mission, structures, and values’ and how to reclaim ‘the political will and organization to mobilize and accomplish the necessary changes and reconfigurations’ (Aina 2010:24).

In many places, reform boiled down to massification with an eye to generating funds for the university from ‘parallel’ degree programmes. In places like Uganda, this was logically followed by a reduction in state financing of higher education. The university opened up to parallel degree programmes where students who did not originally qualify for admission to university were admitted into a different module of lectures from the regular students. Of course, this meant that admission was relaxed to a point where almost everyone qualified to undertake a degree course. In some cases, bridging courses of various levels of seriousness were established to elevate the qualification of otherwise unqualified applicants. Universities in Kenya have opened up new campuses across the country, in some cases building new campuses structures within strategic places in the city to attract students and in other cases, buy out existing secondary schools or tertiary colleges and set these up as ‘new’ campus.

The new campuses have come with more opportunities for patronage that undermines the core values and functions of a university. For instance, they opened up new administrative vacancies to be filled up starting with that of Principal or co-ordinator. As I argue below, not only have VCs appointed to these vacancies faculty who pass the loyalty test, they have ensured that those appointed are ethnically compliant; i.e. they either come from the region where the campus is located or is of the same ethnic origins as top managers in the university. This means that the patronage system in place has systematically been ethnicised in a manner that undermines the status of the university as a national, not ethnic, institution. Worse, this expansion has negatively affected teaching faculty. Lecturers are not only required to teach round the year including during the holiday session, but also to travel and teach in far-flung places. There has been no commensurate increase in the number of lecturers and neither was there any serious attempt to expand the teaching facilities like lecture halls, laboratories, computers and libraries prior to the launch of these programmes. As a consequence, junior faculty, who did not qualify to lecture, were tasked to teach and supervise students. For many lecturers, teaching and supervising students replaced research and publishing. 'Since the number of students one has supervised is an important ingredient in the promotion criteria, some lecturers have sought to mitigate the inability to conduct research and publish, by supervising many students' (Wangenge-Ouma 2008:463). Indeed, universities have rewarded some with promotions on the basis of teaching/supervising students alone. Never mind that the quality of that supervision is hardly examined.

Since many of these developments in Kenyan universities took place under the Moi regime, it is obvious that the main legacy of Moi's presidency in university education was uncontrolled expansion in university admission, collapse of infrastructure for teaching including lecture halls and libraries, the exodus of faculty into exile or for greener pastures or into the civil society sector. This process represented the fragmentation of the Kenyan intellectual community and a crippling of its ability to mobilise for social transformation. By 2002 when Moi left office, universities were very weak sites for organising. Lecturers were over-committed by increased work load, proliferating parallel degree programmes and consultancy. Most lacked basic qualifications for teaching or supervising and had limited international connections. In other words, the community was fragmented, knowledge was degraded and the intellectual community was composed of disinterested and unmotivated lecturers.

Consequently, the capacity of local universities to produce a group which has collective interest in the production of knowledge and its application for the betterment of society remains limited. The existence of such an interest group is a precondition for the university to play its rightful role in social

transformation. If this group has potential to exist in Kenya, it is fragmented and the knowledge it produces dispersed into inaccessible locales. Worse, the prospect for reconstituting this group is limited because its base for organising is the union. Staff union struggles have been reduced to fighting over distribution of income from private students, while no struggles are noticeable in the area of academic quality and scholarly responsibility. Faculty union is currently preoccupied with bread and butter issues for the most part. Their intermittent activism does not connect with wider societal interests and university-based intellectuals are conspicuous by their absence whenever pressing national issues are discussed.

The ascendance of Mwai Kibaki to power in 2002 marked a moment of euphoria and hope for change. Kibaki indeed instituted some changes in the academy. He withdrew as Chancellor of all public universities and appointed eminent Kenyans like Professors Ali A. Mazrui in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and Bethwell Alan Ogot for Moi University to those positions. Others included Joe Wanjui, Harry Mule and Bethuel Kiplagat for UoN, Kenyatta University and Egerton University respectively. This development should have depoliticised the Chancellorship and released the authoritarian hold the government held over universities. Second, a competitive procedure for appointing VCs was instituted. The incoming Chancellor of the UoN actually set the ball rolling by conducting a competitive process of appointing a new VC. Other universities soon followed suit and most of the VCs today are supposedly appointed through an 'open and competitive' process. The question is: what significant change, in terms of administration and in relation to the core mission of research and training, have we witnessed in the universities? Have intellectuals taken the opportunity presented to define the vision, mission, and values of the university and to re-engage in popular struggles?

Intellectuals Cede More Ground

Faculty failed to seize the opportunity to control the initiative of transforming universities into citadels of excellence and agents of social transformation in society. Instead, this initiative remained with the VCs who, contrary to Munene's laudatory notion of '*depoliticised chancellorship*' and '*market-sourced vice-chancellorship*', have repoliticised them in new ways. This re-politicisation depends largely on the control most VCs exercise over funds acquired through parallel degree programmes. Some have used these funds to entrench their dominance in universities as there is limited government oversight over these income-based funds.

Management initiative to change the university is however trapped within the neo-liberal market-based reform logic that, above everything else, seeks

managerial efficiency and profitable returns to investment. There is a local assumption that efficiency alone will enable the university to attain world class status. This status is however defined in terms of the ability of universities to mount income-generating programmes/projects and to master the language of business plans. The production of quality and socially conscious graduates is not prioritised. Thus, instead of designing intellectual plans, universities are drafting business plans with emphasis given to rapid results initiatives and quick measurable outcomes. The long term and painful process of research and learning is consequently frowned upon as the new tyranny of measurable outcomes is installed.

It is therefore not surprising that most Kenyan universities have in recent years celebrated achievements around managerial efficiency. For instance, the fact that KU was ranked top among State Corporations in Performance Contract Evaluation for 2006-2007 was celebrated not just as a major achievement but perhaps as the most important achievement. It was however not lost on keen observers that this evaluation did not scrutinise academic achievement – that is, how managerial efficiency translates into significant intellectual contribution falls outside the framework of this evaluation. Thus, these reforms have not gone towards effective transformation of universities into citadels of excellence, agents of transforming society for the better and as champions of social justice. University academics have consequently been left agonising over a reform logic that entails only the search after ISO (International Organization for Standardization) Certification and beautification of the campuses⁷ instead of organizing universities positively to contribute to change in society. The celebration around performance contract, ISO compliance and beautification aptly displays how disengaged from everyday social struggles university academics are.

Matters have not been helped by the fact that public universities are in the news for anything but relevant contribution to societal struggles. The most damning recent examples are reports on tribalism in the university. Tribalism is indeed a perennial cancer in the university. It has been used to infiltrate and fragment faculty unions and student associations and to undermine collective organizing for social justice. Thus, a chairman of a local chapter of the staff union has openly sided with VC on important union issues mainly due to ethnic affiliation. The university, in turn, pays his tuition for Ph.D. studies. On the other hand, and as hinted above, VCs are guilty of tribal based appointments. At KU, the appointments have been used to enhance gender equity but gender itself is secondary to ethnicity. The university is therefore generating its own version of an ethnicised anti-democratic female power structure that continues to muzzle freedom of expression within. This structure is not qualitatively different from the male power structure that has dominated university

administration in Kenya for long. Like previous administrations, this structure rewards mediocrity and encourages petty spying and rumour-mongering. There continues to be a fear of spies walking around with voice recording devices and, once in a while, colleagues involved have been identified and embarrassed with their recording devices.

Academics and students at universities are however culpable in the destructive antics promoted by the administration. Faculty have undermined the values of quality, empowerment and transformation in many ways. Spying on colleagues is the least worrisome issue. The prevalence of rote learning with its emphasis on memorisation and repetition is perhaps a worse problem at the university. Paulo Freire described this as banking education in which 'the scope of action allowed to the student extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing [what the teacher] deposits'. This kind of education bears no transformative energy. On the contrary, it annuls 'the students' creative power' and is not interested in developing their 'critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world' (Freire: 1994[1970]:53-54). As Mwangi Chege confirms, 'banking education remains the predominant pedagogy' in Kenyan universities. For him, 'a pedagogy that undermines students' voices' is no less criminal than 'government-instigated suppression of discourse' (Chege 2009:66-67).

There is anecdotal evidence from personal observation and newspaper reports that confirms the role of intellectuals in stifling student growth even though the responsibility for the lack of critical engagement of universities with society is shared between faculty, students and administration. Faculty are responsible for a failed pedagogy. Professors have abdicated from their core task of training junior lecturers. The highest levels of decision making in the university like the Senate are occupied primarily by full professors. But many of them have watched as management contravenes cherished universities statutes. In one instance at Kenyatta University after the March 2009 student riots, faculty in the Department of History received a memo informing them that 'examination for regular undergraduate students will commence on 30/03/09' and that for 'those who may not have finished the syllabus there is a probability of adjusting the examination at the exam office in the administration'. This memo, written by the Chairman was occasioned by a decision by the university management to shorten the semester by a few weeks therefore requiring those who had not covered the syllabus to adjust the examination set moderated by the external examiners earlier in the semester. When I presented this memo at a KU chapter meeting of UASU, it did not elicit the level of outrage proportionate to the breach.

Perhaps what is most damning is that university faculty and students have remained silent when such egregious cases are exposed. Just like in the years

of one-party authoritarianism, there is a remarkable climate of silence and a culture of self-censorship among academics and students. The culture of silence amidst decaying standards and of self-censorship in the face of glaring administrative contravention of statutes is a fine example of how society is democratising faster than the university. This culture reached a crescendo in early 2008 in at least two universities where, fearing that post-election tensions and violence would spill into the university, the administration ordered lecturers not to talk politics on campus. In an address to all teaching staff on 22 January 2008 held at SZ39 Hall, the KU VC, described the university as 'apolitical' and outlined measures she thought necessary for 'promoting peace' and safeguarding 'the good image of our university'. This included a decision collectively arrived at by KUSA (the student association), UASU (the Staff Union), the University Council and University Management to 'leave politics out of classrooms', avoid 'giving examples which might cause tension and anger' and avoid 'talking politics with them [students] outside class, e.g. in our homes or in/out of campus'.⁸ In other words, silence and feigning ignorance of the post-election situation was thought of as a recipe for peace. When reminded that in disciplines like history one cannot avoid politics, society and democracy, she retorted that in that case, lecturers were advised for the time being to leave out teaching topics that could force them to mention such terms.

There is similar acquiescence to administrative dictates among students with the student associations and its leadership being the most compromised. Perhaps, one way of understanding these shifts in student politics and activism is to locate it in the neo-liberal reforms that transformed universities. These reforms entailed the introduction of cost-sharing at the university with an insistence on students meeting the cost of tuition, food and related expenses. The introduction of fee paying at the university in the early 1990s fragmented the university student population in new ways and forced many to devise new coping strategies. Among the strategies adopted have been the introduction of petty business that enables poor students earn a living and survive the harsh reality of university education.

This class dimension to student life in the university has its winner and losers. While many students have resorted to indulging in legitimate businesses, the instance of male and female students offering 'escort services' is perhaps the most striking negative consequence. Rich men (mainly politicians) and women (mainly business women) have used this occasion to sexually prey on poor students by soliciting sexual service in exchange of money, drugs, and related presents. The lurid details of this indulgence came to light following the death in mysterious circumstances of Mercy Keino, a University of Nairobi student, on 18 June 2011 after attending a party in Westlands Area of Nairobi. The instance exposed the double life of female students who have been trapped

by the allure of easy money in Nairobi's underworld 'where illicit sex, alcohol and rich men mix in one of Nairobi's latest fads'.⁹

The student leadership has not been spared either. While in earlier days of one-party dictatorship, student associations were training ground for national leadership, in recent times, student leaders rarely graduate into national leaders. On the contrary, students seek leadership with a focus on the immediate gains that such positions promise. Not only do student leaders attract the attention of eager university administrators who seek to compromise and manipulate them, politicians too have sought to influence campus politics in their own favour. Campaigns for student leadership mimic national political campaigns in many ways; from the expensive colourful campaign posters to the staggering amounts of money student leaders spend. Egerton University student leader, Erick Mutwiri, is reported to have spend Kshs. 100,000, his counterpart, Joseph Mbaka, of Maseno University used Kshs. 34,000 while Paul Maloba of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology is reported to have spend a whopping Kshs. 300,000.¹⁰ It is not clear where students source these huge sums of money.

The immediate benefits of being elected student leader include a monthly salary, free meals and an exclusive residential room that is properly furnished including television. Student leaders have also confirmed that there are other spin-off gains including 'connections to the high and mighty' and generous allowances from the many seminars they attend. At Kenyatta University, the president and vice-president of Kenyatta University Student Association (KUSA) were flown to a fully paid trip in the USA to visit the world's best-ranked universities and learn leadership skills. Such generous benefits for student union leaders are the reason why many students believe that their leaders are on the payroll of university management. These student leaders enjoy other benefits including after-graduation job placements. This has created a rift with other students, especially those perceived by the administration as uncompromising. Overall, it seems that student leadership is driven less by desire to contribute to betterment of student welfare and social transformation of society and more by personal gain.

Conclusion

From the preceding, it is clear that the changes instituted in the university after the end of the Moi era have been cosmetic at best and do not constitute a basis for transforming the university into a citadel of excellence and a site for waging struggles for popular empowerment and social justice. First, the level of student dissatisfaction with the university management continues even though this dissatisfaction hinges on newer issues like the question of fees. The hope that

these new issues would provide a basis for redefining the vision, mission and values of universities have faded since intellectuals have left this process to a university management that operate with a neo-liberal market logic. Second, the quality of university education continues to be questioned and its relevance to our context doubted. Three, staff apathy in most public universities persists. However, this is greater for some universities than others.

Four, both the government and the university management have abdicated from funding research in the university. Few public universities in Kenya have clearly stated how much of their annual budget goes to supporting research. Budgets at the university still remain secret documents and the barest of information about them is released. Five, greater emphasis instead goes to income generating parallel degree programmes. These are energy-sapping programme that contributed to the death of the research and seminar culture at the university. While these programmes are generating income, few know how much income they generate and how it is re-deployed to improve university infrastructure (especially university libraries) and enhance the quality of teaching. Instead, funds generated have entrenched the dominant position of the VCs who control these funds and use them as a patronage resource. Six, faculty involvement in the major decisions affecting universities is still insignificant. In some universities, the legally constituted faculty union, UASU, is treated with the outmost contempt. The judicial system has been usefully complicit in defeating union activities by dragging cases through the courts for long periods. Finally, the public remains sceptical of the value of public universities and has repeatedly raised these doubts in newspaper commentary. Universities and intellectuals have also not shown themselves to be very responsive to societal needs, except when they indulge in ill-defined procedures called corporate social responsibility.

Generally, universities do not award the administration the leading role in its activities. Kenya is therefore the exception to this rule. Its emerging group of management academics facilitate the reactionary positions of the administration and further disengage intellectuals from popular struggles. The most important arms of the university everywhere are teaching faculty and students. In Kenya, the faculty and students are the least valued members of the universities. This is not because the VCs have denied them that position, it is because the professoriate has ceded ground and VCs have only too gladly taken over the space. If universities must play a role in popular struggles for social justice, the intellectuals must reinvent themselves and rediscover their historical mission. As things stand now, they need to be rescued by initiatives outside the university.

Notes

1. This is a revised and expanded version of a chapter titled *The Academy as a Site of Popular Struggle: From Rise and Fall to Re-composition* forthcoming in a study titled *The Power is Ours* (FAHAMU, 2012). The chapter benefited from comments at a TrustAfrica Higher Education Pan-African Agenda Setting Dialogue on 'Trends, Themes, Challenges, and Opportunities for Higher Education Transformation in Africa' held from September 26-28, 2011 at the University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana. I am grateful to Pinkie Mekgwe, Adebayo Olukoshi, Jimi Adesina and Tade Aina for their comments to my presentation at the meeting and to Ibrahim Oanda for his comments on the draft of this article.
2. Munene's article is based entirely on interviews with university officials including 'leaders, senior administrators, deans, departmental heads, union leaders, student leaders and senior scholars'. As such it reflects very much the official view on issue affecting universities (See p. 16 for quote).
3. Fee payment is at the centre of the government definition of universities. According to the Universities (Establishment of Universities) Standardization, Accreditation and Supervision Rules, 1999, 'private university means a university with funds other than public funds. Public university means a university maintained or assisted out of public funds' (See Mwiria, et al., 2007: 177).
4. I have borrowed this categorization of age of euphoria and troubled relationship from Mkandawire (2005: 17, 20).
5. Abdulla wrote the book titled *Voice of Agony* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o wrote *Devil on the Cross* during their detention.
6. In some universities, the only elective positions remaining are Deans of Faculty. In Kenyatta University, for instance, the VC has gone further to dilute the elective mandate of Deans by appointing Associate Deans in select schools. Associate Deans owe loyalty to her office. This has been the case for the School of Education and the Graduate School.
7. See *Kenyatta University Newsletter*, vol. 4, Issue 6 of 21 May 2008 for Performance Contract Evaluation and *Kenyatta University Newsletter*, vol. 4, Issue 7 of 9 June 2008 for celebration on ISO 9000: 2000 certification.
8. Text of this speech is on file of the author of this paper.
9. See 'The Double Lives of Kenyan University Students' in *Sunday Nation*, June 3 2011 accessed at <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/The+double+lives+of+university+students+/-/1056/1193332/-/7rwk4/-/index.html>
10. See Nyambega Gisesa, 'Keeping Up With Student Leaders', accessed at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201105140095.html>

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Crystallising Commitment to Transformation in a South African Higher Education Institute

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Abstract

This paper emerges out of an ethnographic study conducted at the University of Cape Town that explored the dynamics of an intervention providing a ‘safe space’ for university staff to engage in alternative ways with South Africa’s apartheid past, the university’s institutional culture and with each other. This paper focuses on the social politics that arose between the intervention, its participants and imagined non-participants in relation to the university’s ‘transformation’ vision. The interventionist intention was reworked by participants at a ground level into key symbols by which participants shaped the patterns of their behaviours and gave meaning to their experiences. Utilising Ortner’s (1973) model for recognising and using key symbols, I argue that ‘transformation’ and ‘safe space’ are *elaborating* symbols in that they have conceptual and action elaborating power. These elaborating symbols operate in relay with a kind of logic that ‘crystallises commitment’ from participants to the intervention in an emotionally powerful and relatively undifferentiated manner. In so doing, they render the intervention a ‘summarising’ symbol capable of expressing what their experience means to them as an imagined community in relation to others.

Résumé

Cet article est issu d’une étude ethnographique menée à l’Université de Cape Town. Il explore la dynamique d’une intervention permettant au personnel de l’université de s’engager dans une voie alternative à celle de l’apartheid en Afrique du Sud. Il traite de la politique sociale qui apparut entre

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l'intervention, ses participants et non-participants imaginaires par rapport à la vision « transformatrice » de l'université. L'intention des interventionnistes a été retravaillée par les participants des principaux symboles qui mettent en forme les motifs de leurs comportements et donnent un sens à leurs expériences. Utilisant le modèle d'Ortner (1973) de reconnaissance et de symboles-clés, je soutiens que la « transformation » et « l'espace sûr » représentent une élaboration symboles, en ce sens qu'ils ont le pouvoir d'action et d'élaboration conceptuelle. Ces symboles d'élaboration fonctionnent en relais avec une sorte de logique qui « cristallise l'engagement » des participants vers l'intervention d'une manière émotionnellement puissante et relativement indifférenciée. Ce faisant, ils font de l'intervention un symbole capable d'exprimer ce que leur expérience signifie pour eux en tant que communauté imaginée par rapport aux autres.

Introduction

Of the many emails that made their way into the inbox of the Transformation Officer at the University of Cape Town (hereafter UCT), was one that noted:

Hi all, it was a bit of a shock to get back to work yesterday. I miss seeing your faces and hearing your voices! I was still feeling a bit wiped out and the environment felt strange, or rather I felt as though I wasn't sure whether I fitted in or not. It wasn't helped by the fact that some people in my department, who knew I had been on the workshop, were looking at me a little curiously, as though I might have grown horns or something. I met with the only other person in my department to have done the workshop. She did it two weeks ago and it sounded as though she had very much the same kind of experience that we did. She was still feeling a little bit vulnerable ... I am aware, very aware, that our workshop experience is not universally shared and I don't want my experience to be degraded by other people's cynicism, nor do I want to bury my experience in the business of the job. I know [the Transformation Officer] appreciates any feedback about the course from us and if the only thing we do is to send her feedback we will have made the workshop live on, at least a little.

The writer was a participant of a *Khuluma* workshop emailing fellow workshop participants after returning to work the next day. The idea behind the workshop was to retreat from the familiarity of the university's work environment for three days in order to enter a space in which to engage in alternative ways with each other around South Africa's apartheid past and the university's institutional culture. *Khuluma*, meaning 'to speak out' in isiXhosa, was an intervention that built upon the then Vice Chancellor's desire to create 'open and safe spaces for dialogue and debate on transformation and diversity issues' (University of Cape Town [UCT] 2006a:3). It was also imagined that through these 'organised and supported sets of conversations' specific courses of action could be identified that would 'effect a lasting, sustainable, set of changes in institutional culture' (UCT 2006a:1).

This paper explores the social politics that arose in relation to the university's 'transformation' vision, through examining the interface between the Khuluma workshops, its participants and imagined non-participants. Through the email above, the writer seeks to claim the Khuluma workshop a success for himself, and to preserve the integrity of individual experience. Although both personal growth and workshop commendation were at stake here, the focus of his commentary revolved around 'protecting' the Khuluma process from criticism from both within and outside of the workshop process. This 'protection' calls attention to what Ortner recognised as the 'crystallization of commitment': a condition necessary for identifying key *summarising* symbols (1973:1342).

The technical term 'key symbol' derives from Sherry Ortner's 1970 dissertation, which made its way into anthropological and popular writings through an article in *American Anthropologist* in 1973. Programmatically laying out an analysis for recognising and using key symbols, Ortner defined two kinds of key symbols on an ideal-type continuum: 'summarising' and 'elaborating'. Ortner was careful to point out that her typology was a heuristic concept rather than a precise reflection of distinct and distinguishable kinds of symbols. Paying heed to this warning, I draw on her model as a framework within which the complexities of an unfamiliar system of cultural symbols may be sorted out. The use of key symbols here should not be viewed as deterministic or overly constraining. That said, Ortner's model generally does not account for power. Thus this paper is both an application of her model to a specific, unusual instance, and a revision of an existing body of theory by exploring the relationship between symbols and power. Drawing on Ferguson's (1990:275) sense of a 'machine' as 'an anonymous set of interrelations that only ends up having a kind of retrospective coherence', I argue that there is power operating between two particular *elaborating* symbols that worked together in relay to produce and crystallise commitment to the interventionist intentions of Khuluma. This paper seeks to demonstrate the complex ways in which 'transformation' and 'safe space' emerged as *elaborating* symbols that interacted to enable participants to rework Khuluma into a *summarising* symbol, through which participants shaped the patterns of their behaviours and gave meaning to their experiences.

On Key Symbols

As every experienced field-worker knows, the most difficult task in social anthropological field work is to determine the meanings of a few key words, upon an understanding of which the success of the whole investigation depends (Evans-Pritchard 1962:80).

The difficulty of identifying ‘a few key words’ and the necessity for their identification, suggests that they shape the ways that social actors see, feel, and think about the world – that is they provides crucial clues to ‘culture’. Looked at another way, ‘culture’ can be deciphered and commented upon by interpreting key symbols and rituals.¹ Sherry Ortner’s seminal essay laid out an analysis for the recognition and operation of ‘key symbols’, not to be studied in and of themselves, but for what they can reveal about social processes (1973). The focus of interest is not why a symbol is key; it is only a signal that the symbol is playing some key role in relation to other elements. ‘Every culture’, she argued, ‘has certain key elements which, in an ill-defined way, are crucial to its distinctive organizations’ (1973:1338). For Ortner, these key elements were a ‘jumble’ of ‘things and abstractions, nouns and verbs, single items and whole events’ (ibid:1339). According to Buck (1999:10), a key symbol is ‘a superordinating, dominant image of an idea or an ideal’ which is ‘immediately cognizable’ and ‘commands respect, fixes attention on the intentional referent for which it stands, a silent yet evocative representation of something religious, present, ethereally imperial’.

For Ortner, a summarising symbol, not surprisingly, ‘sums up, expresses and represents’ several complete ideas into one symbol or sign that the individual perceives, that is, it comes to ‘stand for’ the system as a whole (1973:1340). Often this includes iconic, sacred symbols, such as the cross for Christians, but includes ‘objects of reverence and/or catalysts for emotion’ such as a national flag or hero. It might include more conceptual ideas such as the symbol of ‘matriarchy’ as a form of female power drawn upon by regional separatists in their construction of a distinctive regional identity, such as that described by Kelley (1994) in her discussion of Galician identity. A summarising symbol speaks to a level of emotional response, in that it ‘focuses power, draws together, intensifies thereby catalyzing impact’ on an individual (Ortner 1973:1342). In short, summarising symbols result in a ‘crystallisation of commitment’ to a singular meaning of the symbol.

Conversely, elaborating symbols succeed by fitting complex and possibly indistinguishable beliefs, practices, concepts and emotions into a workable framework. When a symbol comes to stand in for this complexity, an individual can communicate their ideas to others more effectively. Elaborating symbols help to sort, categorise and make sense of experience. They can be further subdivided into two categories, that of ‘root metaphors’ and ‘key scenarios’. Ortner refines Stephen Pepper’s notion of ‘root metaphor’ which is related to the ability to elaborate or orient thoughts. Describing these as symbols which are ‘good to think’ with, root metaphors operate to ‘sort out experience, to place it in cultural categories and to help us think about how it all hangs together’ (Ortner 1973:1341). Ortner draws on Godfrey Lienhardt’s (1961) careful

description of religion among the Dinka of southern Sudan and the role of cattle as a root metaphor for understanding in Dinka everyday and metaphysical thought. The physical structure of the bull, he argued, served as an analogy of societal structure. An example of this was the way the meat of a sacrificed bull was divided and distributed according to status, functions and interrelationships of the major social groups. Equally cattle-colour vocabulary configured all perceptions of colour, light and shade in the world. To take this away, the Dinka ‘would have scarcely any way of describing visual experience in terms of colour, light and darkness’ (Lienhardt 1961:13).

Key scenarios, Ortner’s other class of elaborating symbols, serve to order action by suggesting ‘a clear-cut strategy for arriving at culturally defined success’ (Ortner 1973:1342). She argues that every society embodies some vision of ‘success’, but how success is defined and the best ways of achieving it differ. Ortner draws on the Horatio Alger myth – the rags to riches message in many books authored by Horatio Alger in the nineteenth century – from the United States of America as her example of a key scenario. The myth formulates both the conception of success as wealth and power, and suggests that there is a simple (but not easy) way of achieving them, by leading exemplary lives and struggling against poverty and adversity through single-minded hard work.

Situating the Study

It is important to recognise that the appearance of a new term, idea or symbol such as ‘Khuluma’, is an active response to a changing social and political reality (Higgins 2007). With the end of apartheid and the first democratic elections in 1994, ‘transformation’ has become a key feature of South Africa’s public and political discourse. More than a century of colonialism followed by half a century of apartheid has created a profound need for transformation in every sphere of South African society. As a significant form of national investment in post-apartheid South Africa, higher education institutes were, and continue to be, seen as vitally important in the transformation process, both as a vehicle for transformation in reconstituting South African society, and in need of transformation in and of themselves (Cloete et al. 2002; Badat 2004; Hall 2007, 2008).

UCT as a historically white and privileged university was positioned as ‘in need’ of transformation by those within and outside of the university. This led to a variety of initiatives driven by individuals and the university executive alike. Institutional Climate Surveys, commissioned research and subsequent discussions at the University of Cape Town initially centred on questions of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, discrimination and inequality (UCT 2001, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2006b). Over time these discussions came to be increasingly dominated by issues of race and

racism, demonstrating how race remained and continues to remain an all-consuming theme within post-apartheid UCT (Erasmus & de Wet 2003; Higgins 2007; Jayawardane 2007; Raditlhalo 2007). Pressured to act in a more pragmatic way, the university executive launched Khuluma in 2006 (UCT 2006a, Macdonald in press).²

The initial series of workshops were the culmination of a complex lengthy series of dialogical processes, followed by the rapid transition from concept to implementation. The early Khuluma workshops³ were facilitated by an external specialist development agency, and were based on three-day non-residential workshops shaped by a corporate model modified for the university working environment.⁴ The workshops were open to all university employees. The demographic profile of informants cut across all apartheid-imposed racial classifications, gender, age, home languages, department, length of employment at UCT and academic/PASS⁵ staff divisions. Academics, men and PASS (payclasses 1-6) were relatively under-represented in the research process, and reflects how they were represented in the workshops. The roll-out of workshops continued beyond 2006 and variations of the Khuluma idea still continue at the time of writing in 2011.

The dominant finding gleaned from interviews with 47 informants and emails solicited from the University's Transformation Office, was that 93 percent of 71 total responses were overwhelmingly positive about the Khuluma workshops.⁶ Indeed, responses were expressed as both an appreciation of the workshop experience and congratulations to the workshop facilitators and/or the University. This finding extended across all categories of respondents regardless of gender, age, race, home language, department, length of employment at UCT, academic/support staff membership and so on.

The tremendously positive responses indicated that Khuluma was a profoundly important initiative (UCT 2006b, Macdonald in press). Indeed, Khuluma potentially began to address issues of transformation that, since the 2003 Climate Survey, had been identified by the University community as central to its needs. As one respondent said: 'To me, Khuluma was something. My soul was sort of hungry... I want to learn more. I want to feel. I want to hear. I want to see'. Participants were 'hungry' for change on campus. Respondents were 'grateful', 'privileged', 'honoured', 'humbled' for the experiences they had had at the Khuluma workshops. They spoke of it as a 'gift', a 'luxury', an 'enriching experience', a 'powerful journey', an 'amazing privilege', as 'wonderful', 'fabulous' and an 'eye-opener'. Ortner's claim that summarising symbols 'do not encourage reflection' but instead support 'a sort of all-or-nothing allegiance' is a process that appears in play for many Khuluma participants (Ortner 1973:1340). By what Ferguson (1990) calls a 'mechanism', commitment to Khuluma as both a product and an ideal was crystallised for

many, and as such is painted as natural and good, thereby making it very difficult to challenge. I use the term ‘mechanism’ intentionally by invoking Ferguson’s sense of a ‘machine’ as a kind of logic or intelligibility at work in the interaction between the two elaborating symbols – ‘transformation’ and ‘safe space’.

Elaborating Symbols: ‘safe spaces’ for ‘transformation’

Elaborating symbols have conceptual and action elaborating power to ‘crystallise commitment’ to Khuluma as a whole. ‘Transformation’, I argue, is an elaborating symbol, more particularly what Ortner labelled a ‘root metaphor’. Root metaphors are understood to elaborate or orientate thoughts, and to establish a certain view of the world. Ortner appears unconcerned with the linguistic distinctions between ‘symbol’ and ‘metaphor’, yet it is important to bear in mind what a metaphor is and what a metaphor does, as this relates to an appreciation of the dynamics of thought orienting root metaphors. Max Black, in his essay on metaphors, argues that ‘metaphorical thought is a distinctive mode of achieving insight, not to be construed as an ornamental substitute for plain thought’ (1962:267). For Paul Ricoeur, metaphor ‘is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to re-describe reality’ (1978:7). Beyond mere substitution, highly encoded metaphors condense intersections of meanings, which are said to ‘contaminate’ each other.

‘Transformation’ is a nebulous term in the South African context, and carries with it a host of meanings that vary across contexts and individuals. The Dictionary Unit for South African English, (2002) defines transformation as ‘a marked change in nature, form or appearance’. Oloyede (2007:8) describes how the discourse of transformation in post-apartheid South Africa implies a ‘move from the bad old days to the good present’. In introducing its White Paper on the transforming of the public service, the government clearly defined the aim of ‘transformation’ to create a ‘socially coherent and economically equitable society’ (Republic of South Africa, 1995, para. 1). An ‘economically equitable society’ appears to be a more or less tangible outcome and unsurprisingly, racialised economic transformation has taken priority over other forms of transformation, post-apartheid.⁷ Thus, the vagueness of the term leaves a lot of room for different interpretations and resulting practices, although economic transformation has taken priority.

Equally, ‘social coherence’ in public and political discourse merges interchangeably with other terms: social integration (also inclusion), social cohesion, social transformation and reconciliation; each offering little explanation or clarification. Oloyede argues that ‘it does not necessarily follow that with transformation is *social transformation*’ (2007:10, italics in the original).

Drawing on Bourdieu, Oloyede explains that social transformation involves a change of cognitive categories and underlying concepts, which over time result in new emerging practices such as new forms of social interactions. To translate this into the working arena of higher education, it means, for example, that the mere change of racial profile among staff and students does not necessarily produce social transformation. Over time and in combination with other factors, however, it might entail changes in cognitive categories and concepts, and lead to new forms of social interaction, thus, social transformation.

For South African higher education the question remains: what is being transformed? One report highlighted the move away from the colonial heritage and elitism: that 'it is important to change the image of UCT as an elitist, white institution and to shift from closed, exclusionary, systems, processes and procedures to open and transparent participation' (UCT 2004b:2). Other reports speak in more poignant terms of the need for the University to work actively 'through transformative dialogue toward creating an institutional environment at UCT experienced as being more open, more honest, more trusting, more accommodating, more creative at the same time that it continues to be no less robust as an academic institution' (UCT 2005b:2). Khuluma's focus was therefore not merely on demographic representations but also on the ethos, the practices, norms and 'spirit'. Thus, the transformative process went beyond the normal apartheid legacy concerns, and alluded to aspects of human interaction, including attitudes, communication, power relations, and so forth.

Khuluma participants expressed an entanglement of reasons and insecurities around 'transformation' that produced mixed feelings about the workshops. 'Transformation' served as a root metaphor to orient thoughts (and at times actions). One individual said: 'I wondered, if I didn't attend then [my colleagues] might think it is a certain arrogance on my part or a certain separateness of the processes that they feel is important. So, there is that more sort of subtle, I guess, pressure – but very real, yes indeed'. This respondent perceived that others would interpret his absence as indifference to 'transformation' and hence keenly felt a 'subtle pressure' to attend, regardless of other reasons he had for his reluctance. Thus, he found it necessary to firmly state that he believed 'in the idea of transformation at UCT' and therefore in principle accepted the objectives of the Khuluma process. His comments highlighted a disparity that became apparent among some informants between their commitment to transformation at UCT and a concern about what the Khuluma workshops would comprise. Another informant echoed this sense of a contradiction by correcting an assumption made on the part of the interviewer: 'Hang on; I'm not saying I didn't want to come because of transformation. It's just I didn't want to come. I mean I didn't want to go on the workshop because I'm a shy person'. Here we witness the power of 'transformation' as a root

metaphor, operating at the level of ideas, persuading the mind of its legitimacy and potentially coercing particular forms of actions.

The reader will recall, that Ortner's other class of elaborating symbols are key scenarios which serve to influence action. Key scenarios 'are culturally valued in that they formulate the culture's means-ends relationship in actable forms' (Ortner 1973:1341). The then Vice Chancellor called for 'transformative dialogue' through the action orienting key scenario of 'safe space'. 'Safe space' implies 'clear-cut modes of action' for correct and defined success, however infrequently attained. Interestingly 'safe space' as an action orienting elaborating symbol points clearly to modes of speech, a 'certain freedom to speak and act freely' in much the same way as Jürgen Habermas argued for 'an ideal speech situation' (Payrow Shabani 2003). It should be no surprise then that the individuals tasked with transformation at UCT sought an isiXhosa phrase that encompassed notions of 'speaking up and listening well' and incorporated aspects of 'negotiation'. The word *Khuluma* was seen as fitting as 'speaking or talking is at the very core of transformation' (UCT 2006b:61).⁸ 'Safe space' became a means to 'speaking out' rather than an ends in itself.

'Safe space' has its origins in psychological discourses around catharsis, and its use in popular discourse emerged in encounter group scenarios from the 1960s, predominantly in gay bars and feminist consciousness-raising groups by providing exclusive physical and discursive spaces for gays or women to come together to talk and support each other. It has since emerged as a desired classroom atmosphere within education in particular around race, gender and sexuality (Ellsworth 1989; Boostrom 1998; Cook-Sather 2002; Donadey 2002; Boler 2004; Fox & Fleischer 2004; Holley & Steiner 2005; Leonardo & Porter 2010). Five years ago, a quick Google search of the internet predominantly yielded initiatives from educational institutes offering programmes of inclusion, acceptance and support where lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students could 'self-express'.⁹ Today, a similar search suggests that safety from what or who has expanded. There are spaces of safety in the literal sense, such as a safety from physical harm, as experienced by the need for a 'safe house' for victims of domestic violence, rape or other sexual abuse, a home environment free of pollutants for those diagnosed with environmentally ill bodies (Coyle 2004), or safe living and sleeping spaces for those with special needs.¹⁰ Safe space can include virtual spaces of safety, the barrier of technological security between one's personal computer and the wider malware found on the public internet or in protecting data integrity.¹¹ Equally, spaces of safety can be figurative, such as safety located in a discursive arena that allows for 'safe conversations' that might otherwise be too dangerous to discuss in other contexts. The vast majority of literature on safe space, where space relates to dialogue and communication, largely uses the phrase uncritically. For example,

Shalhoub-Kevorkian's (2001) research sought to create safe space in the form of a metaphorical 'dialogue tent' for Palestinian women to speak. Her research carried all the usual assumptions about providing a space where the 'excluded and muted' voices can speak and be heard, with further assumptions that the act of 'speaking' allows for 'rehumanising' (135) and 'self-discovery and self-recovery' of participants (145).

Leonardo and Porter (2010) examine 'safety' as a procedural rule in public race dialogue. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977) notion of symbolic violence, they argue that discourses of 'safety' in a public arena are understood to produce 'spaces of integrity' and notions of behavioural etiquette where all are made to feel safe and included in the public sphere. They suggest that 'safe' public spaces inadvertently enact comfort and safety for whites through intellectualising 'race' and reducing it to an idea, while simultaneously acting as a 'veiled form of violence' against persons of colour. They further argue that to counter this discursive space persons of colour are placed at further risk through the process of having to speak up. They must 'speak up and against' using the behavioural etiquette of 'safety'. Their narratives, bodies and emotions must be contained and domesticated otherwise the speaker runs the risk of being perceived as illogical or irrational.¹²

The search for a safe and shared space in the Khuluma workshops was shifting and complex, as some of the experiences showed. The lived reality of many South Africans is incredibly complex, the realisation of, and connection to, apartheid's legacies startled many workshop participants. Some participants were dramatically touched by apartheid, while others felt they had not been affected at all. Seeking a safe space to talk did not guarantee those participants protection from unbidden emotional surges from memories of a painful apartheid past. 'Many emotions were triggered', wrote an email respondent, 'sadness, anger, helplessness, powerlessness and many more'. The workshop was described as 'opening up wounds' that had been 'shelved', 'dealt with' or 'forgotten' or, equally, wounds for which there was 'no ointment'. Yet, only two respondents found the process too painful to bear, and struggled to contain the powerful memories that surfaced:

The Khuluma workshop reminded me of all the bad experiences in my life, of the pain, the anger and the fear I had inside of me... which I have buried and moved on [from]. When I left the workshop I had to deal with all these emotions inside me on my own once again after putting it behind me so many years ago. I cried for four nights in a row trying to find myself, trying to deal with my emotions. Today, I am sorry that I attended this workshop. I am taking one day at a time knowing that life goes on and I have to move with it.

The workshop was very challenging for me. It brought back sad memories about my past as well as racism and discrimination. Talking about it, for the

first time had severe consequences on my body... I even lost my voice and ended up leaving early on the third day and immediately bought a ticket to go home... because I could not bear being in Cape Town at UCT for one more hour, I wanted to be in my mother's arms and to recuperate.

I feel it is important to note here that we should not create pathology from participants' embodied memories. For the majority of South Africans, lived experience and being in the world is in one way or another 'damaged' by apartheid, making it the norm rather than the exception (Kayser 2005:63-4). Paradoxically, Khuluma challenged participants to embrace, not to avoid, the uneasiness of participation, the shocks of awareness and the dangers of vulnerability (Macdonald, in press). Khuluma participants implicitly understood the paradoxical 'unsafety' located in the metaphoric 'safe space'. Participants wanted to 'make space' that was not necessarily safe but filled with risk, innovation, potential dislodgements and provocative practice.

'Safe space' as a key scenario operates in another way, that is, as a programme for orderly social action in relation to the defined goals of 'transformation'. For Khuluma participants 'safe space' ran the risk of censoring critical thinking through its action ordering power and was in danger of perpetuating some of apartheid's subtle (and unsubtle) patterns of violation. Khuluma participants were encouraged to speak freely and to share their experiences openly without fear of censure, ridicule or exploitation. On the one hand, the 'space' is 'safe' when individuals and groups know they will not face criticisms that would challenge their expressions of identity, that is, they are comfortable, in a state of individualised 'normality' or 'neutrality'. In this instance, expressions of self cannot be challenged. This expectation of respect for another's contribution comes to be understood by the group as a whole as a general prohibition against critically assessing someone else's contribution. As Boostrom (1998:407) emphatically states, 'the problem is that that precise outcome is built into the metaphor of "safe space"'. The ability of the 'safe space' metaphor to order action is revealed quite dramatically in an email to the Transformation Officer.

Despite what we were told in word (that there were 'no right answers', that personal experience was welcome, etc.) it was clear that there were right answers and that questions that were raised were looking for those and no others (to the extent that I felt my that colleagues' words were being violated and manipulated into conforming with these 'right answers') and, by the end of Day 2, the class had learned well and were giving teacher the right answers.

On the other hand, few would erroneously equate emotional safety with an uncritical acceptance of all opinions and behaviour. It is one thing to say that Khuluma participants should not be harassed for an unpopular opinion. It is quite another to say that participants must never be asked why their preferences or opinions differ from those of others.

Meta-narratives of 'safe space' inevitably foreclose other forms of conversation whether one subscribes to ideals of transformation or not. Equally a project based on transformation that is imagined as healing, forgiving and reconciling might inadvertently reinforce the status quo. Those falling outside of the model (for example, foreign nationals and the youth who did not experience apartheid directly) were silenced. Those who were not silenced were bound by conciliatory language that 'safe space' actions. For some, notions of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation are 'too much, too soon', and are too easily imposed and staged in the name of transformation. 'Towards the end I said something about forgiveness even though I did not mean it', said one participant. Finally, the emphasis on stories of a particular kind can result in the foreclosing emotions other than sadness or grief.

These two elaborating modes (root metaphors and key scenarios) reflect 'a relay' or 'point of co-ordination and multiplication of power relations' (Ferguson 1990:274). The university took 'transformation' as its point of entry and justification – launching an intervention that may have had no or little effect on 'transformation', but did have other concrete effects. 'Transformation' provided for individual's cognitive and affective categories and 'safe space' provided for strategies for orderly social action in relation to the defined goal of transformation. As key symbols they are valued for their contribution of 'tying together, multiplying and co-ordinating power relations, a kind of knotting or congealing of power' (Ferguson 1990:274). In turn, these elaborating symbols acted with more or less logic to convert complex ideas, actions and experiences into an intelligible whole – a commitment to Khuluma as both a product and a process. In the words of Ferguson and Lohmann, these symbols are 'neither ornament nor the master key to understanding what happens. Rather than being the blueprint for a machine, it is a *part* of the machine' (Ferguson, Lohmann 1994:181).

'Who has and hasn't been khulumaed?'

All research informants considered an aim of Khuluma to be to implementation of change of some description, but the extent of that change was very different for different people. Although some described Khuluma as 'a life-changing experience', most struggled to identify far-reaching significant (or material) changes. One line of thought would suggest that 'transformation' cannot be 'workshopped', that it is simply a managerial solution to a technical problem – set up a workshop and give it an indigenous name. The importance here is not so much what Khuluma might have failed to do (that is, to effect material change in people's lives), but what it did do. It may be that its real importance in the end lies in the unrecognisable or more ephemeral 'effects' that had a powerful and far reaching impact in cementing commitment to Khuluma as both an idea and a product.

These effects while containing ephemeral qualities, operated in ways that produced 'lasting effects', such as greater 'self-awareness' or the altered behaviour of others, such as greetings with people with whom had had little contact in the past. These small changes should not be overlooked, nor their importance underestimated. Shifts in relationships, no matter how slight, were an important result of the Khuluma workshops. Of all informants, only one did not comment on an improvement in personal relationships with colleagues, even where informants had not felt the workshops to be particularly useful to them. The changes that informants reported were not necessarily massive, but even where small changes had occurred, the effect of this on people's interpersonal understandings was extremely important. For example, many participants commented that they now greeted and were greeted by people they had had little contact with in the past. Though a greeting from a colleague may seem like a very small thing, it was something that was particularly significant to informants.

You know, you always see them storming past... one guy, I never used to greet. Now I would go out of my way and say 'HELLO! How are you?' you know, that person will turn around and now, the greeting you get back is so amazing. Whether he's doing it from his heart, that's his baby. But it made me feel good. Shew!

Kayser (2005) discusses the nuances of greeting and handshakes in post-apartheid South Africa, where physical contact between the self and the 'Other' had previously been socially unacceptable except in very specific ways. Kayser comments: 'A handshake thus made conscious, the touching of palms, the sensation of skin, and the pressure of fingers became an entry to producing an altered social space' (Kayser 2005:71). The email respondent I cited in the opening to the paper implicitly recognised a new social space and language when struggling to sign off his email.

Now I'm stuck here, how do I sign off? 'Cheers', 'Regards' both sound somewhat less than I mean. 'Fondest regards' sounds a bit off and I don't know if I can actually sign off 'Love {name}'. But through all the above I hope you get it, how about 'Much respect?'

Workshop participants appeared to forge new identities in the course of the workshop that exacted a physical and emotional toll. 'It was hectic. I couldn't sleep... I remember thinking "I'm so tired". I felt so drained, extremely tired', recalled another participant. Her reaction was a typical one. Very few participants escaped the exhaustion that accompanied the emotional investment of both actively telling one's story and bearing witness to testimonials from others.¹³

The Khuluma workshops carried all the features that van Genneep (2010) noted as essential for rites of passage – separation, transition, and incorporation.

University staff were removed from their working environment for three days in what Turner (1969) labelled a *liminal* space. The most notable aspect of collective liminality is an intense community spirit, a feeling of great social solidarity, equality and togetherness that Turner labelled *communitas*. The importance of Turner's work is not to be underestimated. While ritual is usually interpreted in the light of its conserving function (as a collective representation which reflects society and insures social solidarity), Turner wants us to perceive its creative function (as a transformative – a generating source of culture and structure). 'It's no good attending something like that and coming away without having been touched' stated one Khuluma participant.

Although the longer term effects of the workshop were largely reported positively, participants' memories of their immediate responses to the workshop were not as affirmative, precisely because the workshop was considered to be so powerful and to have had such an impact. This emotional impact often resulted in an embodied response. For example, this informant found herself entirely debilitated after the workshop was finished:

I stayed out of work the Thursday and the Friday. I was absolutely exhausted, stayed in bed and I actually had a reaction. I hoped to come to work on the Thursday morning and realised that I couldn't go to work. I just knew I could not go to work. I couldn't come in and face the office and face coming into work. I think it was a bodily reaction, because emotion had been pulled out and I took off two days of sick leave. I couldn't ... I just ... I mean I hadn't planned to take time off. I got to bed on Wednesday night and assumed that I'd get up for work the next morning and then I just could not. I realised I couldn't go, so I took the two days off and of course, then I had the weekend and then on Monday I went work.

Many informants' narratives showed signs of 'healing', even if understood to simply mean the power to endure. On the other hand, bodily distress articulates a form of 'dis-ease' with society, bringing to light the process of being in its negative mode. In this sense, bodily and mental distress must be looked on as creative change in the embodied process of 'being-in-the-world'. 'Dis-ease' is itself a process whose peculiarity lays within the rupture it brings about regarding the previous relationship between body, self and society. 'We have come back new beings', declared one email respondent. Other participants expressed something similar:

I needed badly to centre myself or I was going to breakdown. Now crying I think is very constructive, because it allows you to let go. It allows you to express and it allows you to then recompose and sometimes to recompose into something new. We could tell them how much it had hurt us or the other party, only then you could feel, you could actually feel, the energy going from one person to the next person. You just want to embrace, you just want to turn the clock around, and hear out all those bad days. I wish I could only start from today. Ja! That's the feeling.

Informants mentioned, in numerous interviews, a feeling that the Khuluma workshop had been a momentous event – in terms of emotion, forgiveness, relationships, understandings of what it is to ‘transform’. To summarise, participants, on the whole, were ‘hungry’ for something to be done around transformation on campus. This hunger translated into informants who worked extremely hard at making Khuluma work (Macdonald in press). This work involved approaching the workshops openly with trust and honesty and not questioning the facilitator’s model nor why it worked. They were prepared to ignore or ‘get past’ any unsafe space that may have been created through the workshop experience, worked through heavy emotional investment on their own or through their social networks, and argued that Khuluma should be compulsory for all UCT staff (UCT 2006b). In other words, Khuluma was bound to succeed on one level, because participants wanted it to. Khuluma was about ‘feeding hungry souls’.

Thus, Khuluma as a summarising symbol is not so much about seeking out what it achieved but rather its use in claiming that the members of a group of people (a) have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from members of other putative groups (Cohen 1989). Persons having undergone the Khuluma workshops became ‘an imagined community’ able to express relational ideas of both similarity and difference to others (Cohen 1989). The initial Khuluma workshops were described as having consisted of ‘three to four hundred people hungry for this space. Now we are coming up against resistance’ (UCT 2006b). This continuous undercurrent of an ideological resistance established symbolic boundaries for those hundreds who were ‘khulumaed’ and those that were not; namely academics, ‘whites’, management, and/or men. As such perceptions of either overt or covert resistance on the part of particular groups to the Khuluma process were interpreted as calculated and collective as opposed to unthinking, private and unorganised. The rhetorical question asked by a Khuluma participant requesting to know ‘who has been Khulumaed and who hasn’t?’ speaks volumes to the way that actors came to manipulate and transform Khuluma’s meaning in the context of transformation where symbols serve as weapons or rallying points. In this way power often crystallises around a single ‘thing’ which comes to carry a heavy (and sometimes contested) symbolic weight (Kelley 1994). Cohen (1989) proposes that we think of community not as an ‘integrating mechanism’, but rather as an ‘aggregating device’. In his approach, the commonality which is found for those ‘khulumaed’ need not be a uniformity. Here, we see the triumph of key symbols precisely because they are imprecise and thus ‘contain this variety that its inherent discordance does not subvert the apparent coherence which is expressed by its boundaries... This relative similarity or difference is not a

matter for objective assessment: it is a matter of feeling, a matter which resides in the minds of the members themselves' (Cohen 1989:20-21).

The heavy symbolic weight that came to be attached to Khuluma ran the risk of over-emphasis on the workshop encounter. This smooths over a further risk that people might feel they have done their work, that is, they have been 'khulumaed'. Khuluma, as an exercise of practising transformation of institutional culture through dialogue in a safe space, may possibly dissolve into a conservative discourse of reconciliation, unity and closure about the past that neither pays attention to the depth of the socio-economic gaps and the lack of actual interpersonal transformation, nor to the tremendous complexities of building a genuine and sustainable transformed University environment, especially where transformation is variously understood and where its meanings shift over time and across the university. Although Khuluma fulfilled an important initial function for a process of experimentation that individuals could pursue, it remains to be seen if these organised and supported sets of conversations have led to material changes in transformation, or any real improvement the institutional climate of the university.

Conclusion: A Note of Caution

The aim of this paper was to explore how certain key symbols came to have meaning and equally shaped meanings in the lives of staff working at UCT while inhabiting a space that demands 'transformation' of social relationships. Given the existence of competing theories of the symbol and its wide array of definitions it was necessary either to invent or to adapt a model to the exclusion of others. By adapting Sherry Ortner's model and modifying it with insights about power offered by Ferguson (1990), it becomes possible to integrate a cluster of key symbols in a part-to-whole set of relations. However, I offer a note of caution: Why are we (as academics) justified in calling a particular symbol 'key'? Academics struggle over issues of how to interpret symbols and understand their use (and our own use of them). As academics, we are not observers outside the processes of transformation struggle and symbolic representation. We have interests and loyalties and we also contribute to the meaning attached to symbols. Am I not, as a symbolic anthropologist, seeing meaning wherever and however I wish? What range of actors are the controllers of symbolic meaning? Do I acknowledge my role as one of those actors, knowing that the outcomes of one struggle for meaning influences other struggles, and the form and content of the symbols themselves?

I also was a Khuluma participant, who was simultaneously moved and paralysed by the workshop engagement and its ephemeral aftershocks (see Macdonald in press). Its enduring impact unfolds into other spaces. For example, embracing unsafety has allowed me to find a way of talking to students who

struggle with their own trauma, to map out ways to negotiate their personal lives and the academic world that so often neglects them. Equally, it allows me to put my teaching under the spotlight and engage with new pedagogical tools with which to teach and transform student learning environments. It allows me to relinquish control in the classroom and encourage students to find their relationships not only to me but, to their own knowledge and how it has been produced and embodied. It has allowed me to embrace the personal and paradoxical unsafety of the dynamics surrounding researchers and particularly white foreign researchers that were brought sharply into focus through Khuluma for me.

Many participants regarded their feedback of the workshop as a way to find personal closure to their experience of it. Indeed, the research process constituted an additional intervention within Khuluma's broader goals by facilitating ongoing contact between some Khuluma participants, and by enabling them to present their experiences in a wider arena. A similar process appears in play for myself. It would appear that by writing this article I am translating others' experiences into my own; an approach which Pat Caplan, following Ricoeur, defines as 'the comprehension of the self by the detour of the other' (1988:9). Caplan goes on to say, 'we need to acknowledge, and this happens but rarely, that in making this detour, the self also changes' (ibid). Firmly ensconced in this hermeneutic circle, I have glimpsed another change in myself. To return to the opening vignette, I imagine that by writing this 'we [I] will have made the workshop live on, at least a little'.

Notes

1. What Evans-Pritchard identifies as 'a few key words', is understood by Schneider (1968) as 'core symbols' in his study of American kinship, and in his study of Ndembu ritual what Turner (1967) referred to as 'dominant symbols'. Eric Wolf (1958) calls the Virgin of Guadalupe a 'master symbol' in understanding Mexican national identity.
2. See the report 'Hungry Souls: An Ethnographic Study of a Climate Intervention Strategy at UCT', prepared for the University Transformation Office (UCT 2006b).
3. A pilot workshop was launched in June 2006, followed in quick succession by an additional eight workshops from Aug-Sept.
4. See the ProCorp website: www.procorp.co.za
5. PASS refers to the University's professional, administrative and support staff.
6. By the time research concluded in October 2006, approximately 360 persons had participated in the Equality Matters and Khuluma workshops. Qualitative data were generated from interviews with 47 participants and output from two focus group discussions. The University's Transformation Office solicited its own

- feedback, via email, from workshop participants, of which 24 anonymous responses were forwarded to the research team for further analysis. Some of the 47 informants were also email respondents.
7. The South African government's objective to achieve an adaptive economy characterised by growth, employment and equity by 2014 has involved strategies such as Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment and the Employment Equity Act of 1998.
 8. The word 'khuluma' captures both 'to negotiate' and 'to act', but only if we accept that both the syntax and the semantics of the word, as they stand, convey, in themselves, the two meanings. Omitting some letters from the word would lead to the destruction of the very basic meaning of the word khuluma, which is 'to speak'. An alternative word could be 'khulumisenzo', a combination of 'Khulumis': 'to negotiate' and 'senzo', 'to act'.
 9. See, for example, the Wikipedia entry for safe space: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/safe-space> or the toolkit for creating safe spaces for youth: <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org>.
 10. For example, Tools for Wellness (www.toolsforwellness.com) offer a Safe Space EMF Protection Device for clearing spaces of electromagnetic bombardment. The company www.safespaces.co.uk provide custom made furniture for special needs.
 11. There are computer software companies offering products. For example, Perimetrix SafeSpace™ claims a full-spectrum confidentiality protection and data integrity: <http://perimetrix.com/> or the Cnetsoftware: http://download.cnet.com/SafeSpace-Free-Edition/3000-2239_4-10717732.html
 12. For example, see the eight minute trailer for the film *The Color of Fear* by Lee Mun Wah (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yt-o8RZpxT8&feature=related>). The film explores different issues of race in the United States through a dialogue between eight men of different ethnic backgrounds. In this particular trailer, a non-white participant responding to a query from a white participant is perceived as having lost clarity and logic in his narrative, indicates a lack of etiquette through bodily expressed aggression and is generally understood to be 'out of line' in a safe space.
 13. See a description of the author's own emotional turmoil during and after the workshop (Macdonald in press).

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Tension Between Massification and Intensification Reforms and Implications for Teaching and Learning in Ethiopian Public Universities

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the context under which public universities are implementing series of predominantly government initiated and controlled reforms. Accordingly, it attempts to unpack those political, professional, and epistemological factors contributing to the decline of the quality of teaching and learning. Focus group discussions, official government documents and views, proclamations, pertinent national and international studies, informal discussions with university colleagues, and personal experiences have been used as sources of evidence to inform my analysis and discussion. The study revealed that the current educational environment in most public universities is messy and the quality of teaching and learning are at risk. Excessive intervention by the federal Ministry of Education and lack of autonomy seem the prime factors contributing to substandard outputs of the universities. A tension has been created between government's political desire for massification of higher education on one hand, and the inherent desire of the universities and their academic communities for quality education by way of academic intensification on the other hand. Accordingly, the quality of teaching and learning in Ethiopian public universities currently is at risk.

Résumé

Cet article examine d'un point de vue critique le contexte dans lequel les universités publiques mettent en œuvre des séries de réformes initiées et

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contrôlées principalement par le gouvernement. En conséquence, il essaie de décompresser ces facteurs politiques, professionnels et épistémologiques contribuant à la diminution de la qualité de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage. Des discussions de groupe formelles et informelles, des documents gouvernementaux, des textes relatifs à des études nationales et internationales et des expériences personnelles ont été utilisés en tant que sources de données probantes pour l'éclairage de l'analyse. L'étude a révélé que l'environnement éducatif, comme l'enseignement, sont en déclin dans la plupart des universités publiques. L'intervention excessive du ministère fédéral de l'éducation et le manque d'autonomie apparaissent comme les facteurs principaux de déclin des normes universitaires. Une tension est créée entre, d'une part la volonté de contrôle politique du gouvernement et d'autre part, la volonté des universités de préserver une éducation de qualité. En conséquence, la qualité de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage dans les universités publiques éthiopiennes cours le risque d'entrer en déclin.

Background

Higher Education in Ethiopia started with the founding of Addis Ababa University on March 20, 1950. With its several colleges in various regions Addis Ababa University remained the only higher learning institution in the country for over half a century. Over the last about ten years fundamental changes have been taking place in the area of higher education in Ethiopia. Accordingly, some of former colleges under Addis Ababa University were upgraded to full-fledged and independent universities, and other new universities established. This brings the total number of public universities in Ethiopia to 22. This number of universities is expected to be raised to 31 in the near future when the nine universities currently under construction are completed. As a result, enrolment in public universities in regular programmes has increased significantly. It reached 203,455 in the 2009/10 Academic Year. Similarly, the total annual intake capacity of public universities in regular programmes reached 78,822 in the 2010/11 Academic Year.

Higher education reform in Ethiopia went beyond upgrading and the creation of new government universities and the scaling up of tertiary student enrolment. The revision of the curricula, the development and launching of new programmes on one hand and the elevation of others on the other, the establishment of supportive institution such as Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) and the Higher Education Strategy Centre (HESC) could be considered the central achievements of the Ministry of Education. The establishment of these institutions seems to have been initiated and advised by external donors (World Bank 2004a), and then with the recommendations of the 2003 Higher Education Proclamation which was then repealed and replaced by the 2009 Higher Education Proclamation (Government of Ethiopia 2003, 2009; Solomon 2009).

In its review of the Sub-Saharan Higher Education policies and practices of universities, the World Bank in 1988 (cited in the World Bank 2004b:i) expressed its concern and warned educational policy makers that:

Higher education's contribution to development is being threatened ... by ... interrelated weaknesses. First higher education is now producing relatively too many graduates of programs of dubious quality and relevance and generating too little knowledge and direct development support. Second, the quality of these outputs show unmistakable signs in many countries of having deteriorated so much that the fundamental effectiveness of the institutions is also in doubt.

In this regard, although long overdue, the Ethiopian Government claimed to have addressed the recommendations of the World Bank by way of improving quality, increasing efficiency, changing output mix, and introducing a cost sharing strategy. Nevertheless, the implementation and productivity of all claims seem dubious and questionable. Currently, there is a true concern among the public at large and among the academia in particular that tertiary education in Ethiopia has been overly politicized. It has also been needlessly influenced by the government. Consequently quality tertiary education has been left at risk. Unfortunately perspectives promoting quantity at the expense of quality seem to have been considered as innovative and productive among the relevant federal state authorities.

In March 2004, the Ministry of Education established a team of inquiry, Higher Education System Overhaul (HESO), to undertake research on the overall context and practice of higher learning institution in Ethiopia. One of the central problems the HESO team identified was that Higher Learning Institutions, Government and its agencies have not been preparing sufficiently for the kind of autonomy and accountability the Higher Education Proclamation No.351/2003 assured (HESO 2004:5-6). The HESO inquiry did not invest much in curriculum revision and/or development practices nor did it indicate specific reforms needed to overhaul the academic programmes. The team also seemed reluctant meaningfully to considering the teaching staffs as a prime source of information and hence hardly understood the teaching-learning context as well as the status of academic autonomy public universities.

The other important findings of the HESO inquiry team were problems related to the quality of inputs, process, and outputs (HESO 2004:5). Certainly these problems are determinant factors of the overall goal of higher learning institution. Their depth and scope ranges from programme initiation and development, student recruitment and admission to programme implementation and the achievement of quality output. Unfortunately, the current status of the problems identified by the HESO inquiry team in most public universities is either unchanged or worse than before.

Massification, in the context of public universities in Ethiopia, refers to the maximum enrolment of students in public universities and programmes. It does not necessarily refer to the quality of the universities or their curricula. Massification neither shows the appropriateness and quality of enrolled students nor the capacity of the universities to undertake the purpose they were created for. It is a political decision, an exercise aimed at merely creating higher education access to citizens. Intensification on the other hand refers to the quality of the infrastructure and environment necessary to undertake quality education in public universities. Accordingly, it includes the quality of programmes, teaching staff profile, diversity and appropriateness of the curricula, the existence of institutional autonomy, and academic freedom to undertake teaching and learning activities.

This paper attempts to initiate discussions and calls for sense of urgency on some critical issues and practices in Ethiopian public universities. The issues and practices of curriculum initiation and development, student recruitment and admission, staff profile and development, autonomy and academic freedom, are contemporary and critical issues of public universities in Ethiopia and hence its focus.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed method of inquiry in that it used both qualitative as well as quantitative data collection and interpretation procedures. The study is descriptive in that it describes past and present practices and events in public universities. It is also interpretive because it interprets and looks for meanings derived from description. Hence, the study employed a descriptive-interpretive approach. Both primary and secondary sources have been used to generate appropriate data. Accordingly, interview, focus group discussion, official government documents and policies, international and local pertinent studies, informal observations and discussions with people working in public universities, and my personal experiences have been used as sources of information to inform my argument and discussion.

Data generated from transcriptions of interviews and focus group discussions are directly quoted. Primary as well as secondary data were blended by way of presenting a thick description of events and practices across universities. The study concludes by calling for imperative rethinking and action concerning the direction and consequence of the implementation of the reform agenda in Ethiopian public universities. The names of individuals participated in the study by way of providing primary data are purposely omitted so as to safeguard any possible personal and or institutional threat.

Framing higher education in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation No.650/2009 Article 2 defines higher education, in the Ethiopian context to signify 'education in the arts and sciences offered to undergraduate and graduate students who attend degree programmes ...' Accordingly, the Ministry of Education (2010b:56) operationally defined higher education institutions in Ethiopia as 'institutions that are giving the three, four, five or six years undergraduate programmes, as well as those offering the two years Masters and the four years PhD programmes'. The higher education system in Ethiopia has rigid and strict entry as well as exit rules and regulations which start with entrance examination and end with exit examinations without much flexibility. Article 11, No.1 of the higher education proclamation (Government of Ethiopia 2009) has proclaimed that an institution is granted the name and status of a university by the Ministry of Education if:

- (a) it has a minimum enrolment capacity of 2,000 students in regular undergraduate and graduate programmes in at least three academic units larger than departments, or it has a minimum enrolment capacity of 2,000 students in regular undergraduate programmes in at least four academic units larger than departments;
- (b) it has a record of at least four consecutive classes of graduates in a degree programme if it has been rendering services of higher education after being accredited as a university college or institute;
- (c) it undertakes research in different appropriate fields, has published its research products and has facilitated means of dissemination of the research findings to end-users;
- (d) it has a curriculum that matches the national standards set by the Ministry, the necessary academic staff, institutional governing structure as provided for by [the] proclamation, teaching materials, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and other appropriate discipline-related facilities.

However, contrary to this criterion, the same proclamation definitely gives unnecessary authority to the Ministry of Education to establish an institution with the name and status of a 'university' without necessarily fulfilling the requirements. This is apparent when Article 11, No.2 of the proclamation proclaims '... an institution may be established with the name and the status of a university if it is conceived as such and its resource provisions as well as its institutional plans and vision are such that it can, in the judgment of the Ministry, fulfil the requirements ... in an acceptable time'.

This is where the proclamation is too vague and lays down highly subjective standards for which the Ministry will look in establishing an institution as a 'university'. It suffices the Ministry to anticipate the potential and not necessarily the actual capacity of an individual institute to give it the name and status as a university.

According to a study conducted by Forum for Social Studies (2009), problems connected with the expansion of higher education and the proliferation of universities stem from a reluctance or bias in implementing the higher education proclamation regarding awarding an institution the status of a university. This is apparent when Forum for Social Studies (2009: xxi) tells us that:

A number of the new institutions were launched as universities without fulfilling even some of the MoE's criteria for attaining a university status, such as research programmes and scholarly publication, and essential inputs well equipped libraries, laboratories, classrooms, and other teaching learning facilities.

Although how many years it means by 'acceptable time' is still too vague, most public universities established in the past decade or so are still struggling retrospectively to qualify for the name and status they were granted in advance. No one knows whether or not there is a definite period of time allocated for them to fulfil the criterion they have bypassed. Clearly, a good number of Ethiopian public 'universities' in general and those relatively young ones in particular were established without really fulfilling most of the criterion set in the Higher Education Proclamation (Government of Ethiopia 2009).

Curriculum initiation and development

Curricular reforms which have been undertaken since 2003 in Ethiopian public universities remain a serious point of contention among the public in general and the academia in particular on one hand and Government on the other. For instance, all government universities were ordered to review their existing academic programmes and also to develop new undergraduate programmes during 2007 and 2008 Academic Years. A series of workshops were convened to harmonize and centralize the curricula reviewed and developed by individual universities. However, all the efforts and professional arguments aired by academics by way of justifying their rationale for the content and duration of programmes fail to meet prescriptions of the Ministry.

At this stage, it seems logical to pose questions regarding who is responsible in developing curricula for a university, what the academic autonomy of a university is regarding curricular issues, and what the role of the teaching staff is in the process of curriculum revision and development. As Baye (2008:21) correctly points out, teaching and research staff, directly and/or through their democratically elected representatives, should have the right to initiate, participate and determine academic programs of their institutions in accordance with the highest standards of education and basic principles. Regarding the

issue of the curricula of public universities the Higher Education Proclamation No.650/2009 Article 21 has also laid down various prescriptions which include (Government of Ethiopia 2009):

- (a) Every institution shall guide curricular development by its academic units through appropriate learning outcomes;
- (b) The ministry may, without prejudice to the legitimate autonomy of the individual institution, coordinate curricula development common to public institutions;
- (c) The ministry may establish, whenever necessary, national panels, councils or bodies to coordinate and monitor curricula review, development and implementation.

Although current and antecedent proclamations recognize the power and duty of individual public universities and award the mandate and autonomy to determine and implement academic programme the reality, however, is inconsistent with the rhetoric. Public universities necessarily operate preferably under their own mission and objectives. The nature of their mission and objectives also determines the relevance and development of their curricula. Higher education institutions may have similar activities but their mission has to be unique to the individual institution. If all public institutions in Ethiopia are said to have the same mission then it means, to use Amare's (2009:79) words, 'none of the institutions has a mission or it doesn't know its unique mission' (translated from Amharic Language). To this end, currently all public universities in Ethiopia seem to have declared that their mission is generally teaching, research, and community service. These are the three traditionally known generic missions of virtually all higher learning institutions around the globe. According to Amare (2009), those three-dimensional missions of a university could be meaningful if and only if there is a clear order of priority among the three generic missions. Accordingly, the individual university must gear its programme and curriculum vis-à-vis the achievement of the prime and perhaps unique mission it has declared in such a way that it provides insight regarding the broader field of studies and research to which the university is dedicated.

Hence, the so-called 'revised' and/or 'newly developed' programmes failed to acknowledge institutional peculiarities and were all uniformly determined by the federal ministry of education. This seems to have adversely affected the sense of ownership of the teaching staff. This is apparent when one of the institutional audit reports of HERQA (2008:39) reads 'Some members of staff were of the view that most of the curricula are designed through workshops conducted by the Ministry of Education and that individual instructors had no right to revise what has already been set'.

By implication, teachers are deliberately kept from touching what has been authoritatively laid down as their curricula. Accordingly, the implementation process of the reform programmes suffers from the tension created by the authoritarianism and/or politicization of educational development. And hence, teaching and learning in the Ethiopian public universities has become a difficult and unfriendly practice because both the nature of the curricula as well as the recruitment and admission of students are determined exclusively top-down. The academic communities in public universities seem to have been considered as technicians to do whatever they are ordered to do by the Ministry. This has made the quality of curriculum implementation questionable. The institutional audit report of HERQA (2008:32) which reads as follows substantiates this argument: ‘... several of the long established members of staff expressed the view that the increases in the number of students being admitted, coupled with the reduction in the length of most programmes, presented great challenge in terms of course coverage and standards... entrant students were not seen as good as once was the case’.

The HERQA report affirmed Saint William’s (2004:109) observation that ‘The recent disruptive shift from a four to a three year degree programme intensifies the challenges of maintaining (let alone increasing) educational quality’ in Ethiopia. At present, it can safely be asserted that most teaching staff in the Ethiopian public universities are discouraged by a series of top-down prescriptions regarding curricula.

Although most universities proposed a four-year undergraduate degree programme, they were all forced to adjust and align their proposals with the three-year template the Ministry provided them. Finally the Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Education officially ordered all public universities to act according to what he called the ‘Recommendations of the National Council for Higher Education on Curricula Review’ (Ministry of Education 2008). All public universities were, therefore, prevented from launching a new programme or pursuing their existing curricula of more than three years duration without a special request to the federal ministry of education and permission from the same.

On the other hand, whenever government wishes to initiate a new academic programme, whatever its relevance and demand, it will automatically be affiliated to a selected university and be automatically launched without necessarily passing through the necessary process of curriculum development. It, therefore, came to be a normal and uncontested practice, in the Ethiopian public universities, to launch a programme before any checks are made on the sufficiency of the teaching staff, reference material and library, laboratory, and even without adequate preparation of classrooms and accommodation facilities. Furthermore, the rapidity of the implementation process of the reforms

added to the short life of most of the curricular reforms underlines the instability of curriculum reform in Ethiopian public universities. The ills of undergraduate curricula reforms now seem to have also infected the relatively stable curricula of postgraduate programmes. This is apparent when the Masters curricula of the Addis Ababa University was 're-engineered' top-down into modular curricula across the board and delivered through block teaching. This radical reform happened perhaps without the consensus of many of the owners of the academic programmes (Ayalew, Daneal, and Solomon 2011).

Admission to public universities

Public universities in Ethiopia have no control over the students they take in for their regular programmes. It is the federal ministry of education that recruits and determines the number of regular students to be admitted for study in various universities, including specific college or fields of studies. Nevertheless, the Education and Training Policy contains implicit statements with potential implications regarding recruitment of candidates for higher learning institutions. The requirement for an institution specific entrance examination, for instance, is apparent from the following policy statement: 'After the second cycle of secondary education, students will be required to sit for examination of relevant institutions for admission' (TGE 1994:19). On the other hand, the Higher Education Proclamation Article 39 states the following regarding the admission of students to public universities: 'The ministry shall administer the university entrance examination and decide on the eligibility for admission to any institution' (Government of Ethiopia 2009). Thus, it is not difficult to see an inconsistency between the Education and Training Policy and the Higher Education Proclamation No.650/ 2009.

There is consensus in academia, in virtually all universities, that currently, many students are assigned to public universities and colleges without an adequate academic background and accordingly are facing serious learning difficulties. The institutional audit report of HERQA on eight relatively senior public universities also indicates that many students entering university are seen by the staff as poorly prepared for higher education (HERQA 2008:5). One of the academic personnel who participated in the Focus Group Discussion expressed his view, which the others shared, that nicely depicts the severity of the impact of the current recruitment and admission practice on quality education:

Many students who join or placed in faculty of education lack the minimum benchmark to be a university candidate. The fact that least achievers are deliberately placed to teaching stream has crippled all our effort and struggle to produce best achiever or superior teachers. So I feel radical change need to be done at the stage of recruiting and admitting candidates.

A good number of senior teachers in Ethiopian public universities are not only unhappy with the recruitment and admission policies that the Ministry has imposed on them, but are confused and frustrated in dealing with candidates who, according to their judgment, are very much below their expectation and below the aspiration of the Education and Training Policy as well. This is apparent when one of the informant Deans, for instance, has the following to say:

The mess they [teachers] encountered in all terms particularly in dealing with students who virtually are not university materials and academically very weak and incapable to attend university level courses is enormous. Virtually, most teachers seem to be shocked and frustrated by the practice of the Ministry of Education in assigning students who did not properly complete their secondary education to university education...

At this stage it seems advisable to support the arguments here by presenting quantitative data as well. Accordingly, Table 1 depicts the contexts and practices during the last two Academic Years in admitting students to public universities.

Table 1: Admission to Public Universities during the last two Academic Years

| Year | Total No. of grade 12 students who sat for Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination | Total No. of students who scored above 50% | Number of students to public Universities | No. of students who were admitted to public universities without scoring the minimum pass mark (50%) set by the policy |
|-----------------------|--|--|---|--|
| 2008/ 09 (2001E.C) | 86,238 | 31,934 (37.03%) | 73,111 (84.8%) | 41,117 (56.3%) |
| 2009/ 10 (2002E.C) | 85,610 | 38,901 (45.4%) | 78,822 (92.0%) | 39,921 (50.6%) |

Source: Ministry of Education (2010a, 2010b).

The data presented in Table 1 are a good indication that many students now joining our public universities are ill-prepared to pursue higher studies and engage in research. However, it seems that the government has kept up the pressure for increased enrolments as well as for graduating students as if they are goals in themselves. The following table depicts the trend of enrolments and graduates of public universities in Ethiopia.

Table 2: Trends of Enrolments and Graduates in and from the regular programmes of Public Universities

| Year | Enrolments | | | Graduates | | |
|---------|----------------------|----------------|------------|----------------------|----------------|------------|
| | Undergraduate Degree | Masters Degree | PhD Degree | Undergraduate Degree | Masters Degree | PhD Degree |
| 2005/06 | 93689 | 6321 | 64 | 21,472 | 1381 | 7 |
| 2006/07 | 107,960 | 6935 | 122 | 23,367 | 2661 | 10 |
| 2007/08 | 127,033 | 7211 | 258 | 26,839 | 2645 | 19 |
| 2008/09 | 157,429 | 9436 | 325 | 31,926 | 3416 | 15 |
| 2009/10 | 190,043 | 12,621 | 791 | 38,174 | 4500 | 149 |

Source: Ministry of Education (2010b:137-138).

Out of those 190,043 undergraduate regular students 20,161 (10.6 %) of them are enrolled at Addis Ababa University. This is the highest enrolment in undergraduate degree programmes compared to all other government universities. Similarly, out of the 12,621 students enrolled in the Masters degree programmes 6,047 (47.9%) of them are housed at Addis Ababa University. Only three Government universities were running PhD programmes (Addis Ababa, Haromaya, and Gondar universities). Accordingly, out of the 791 PhD candidates 662 (83.7%) of them are at Addis Ababa University, 122 (15.4%) of them at Hromaya, and the rest (seven) of them at Gondar university (Ministry of Education 2010b:140).

There is no question that higher education in Ethiopia needs to expand even more if the country is ever to catch up with the other developing regions. The question, however, is finding the appropriate balance between massification and the quality of education and training.

Public universities, by and large, feel that they have little or no control regarding student admissions to their regular undergraduate programmes. The role left to them, they said, is just to place students in different academic departments and programmes.

Teaching staff profile

The concept of 'academic staff' in the Ethiopian context is rather vague. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between 'proper' teaching and/or research staff and other supporting members of the academic community. It may be that a member of the academic community of individual university is awarded the status of academic staff by the authority. This is apparent when the Ethiopian

higher education proclamation No.650/ 2009 Article 2 defines academic staff as ‘members of an institution employed in the capacity of teaching and/or research, and any other professional of the institution who shall be recognized so by senate statutes’ (Government of Ethiopia 2009). This definition is less explicit and vaguer than the definition of ‘academic staff’ given by the proclamation No.351/2003 (Government of Ethiopia 2003). Article 30 of the higher education proclamation No. 650/2009 also vaguely indicates the necessary qualification and professional ranks for academic staff at higher learning institutions when it proclaims:

- Any institution may have the following academic staff: professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers, assistant lecturers and, under unique circumstances or conditions of transition, graduate assistants employed for teaching and/or research;
- ...graduates with bachelor degrees may be employed as regular academic staff in government institutions only on the basis of directives to be issued by the Ministry;
- Every institution shall ensure adequate supply of academic staff in quality as well as in numbers;
- The Ministry shall issue, from time to time, minimum academic staff ratios with regard to educational qualifications and professional ranks, which shall be complied with by every institution.

The number of academic staff in Government universities has leaped from 5,788 in 2005/06 (1998E.C) to 14,126 in 2009/10 (2002 E.C) with around 950 (6.7%) comprised of expatriates (Ministry of Education 2010b). The number and qualification mix of teaching staff are highly heterogeneous and disproportionate. It seems as if there is no need for clear academic standards to be followed regarding the qualifications of university academic staff. It also seems that the issue of academic qualifications required to teach at public universities is curiously omitted from explicit definition in the higher education proclamation No.650/2009. However, the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA 2008:27) recommended a qualification profile for university academic staff: less than 20 percent first degree holders, about 50 percent Masters Degree holders, and about 30 percent terminal degree (PhD) holders. Not only at a university level, but this proportion of staff mix is expected to be fulfilled at faculty as well as at each department level. At present there are virtually three sets of public universities in Ethiopia (universities with a comparatively low staff profile, an average staff profile, and a high staff profile).

Table 3: Teaching staff in universities with low staff profile 2009/10

| Universities | Staffs | Level of Qualification | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------|------------------------|----------------|---------|----------------------|--------------------|
| | | PhD Degree | Masters Degree | MD/DVM | Undergraduate Degree | Diploma and Others |
| Axum University | 413 | 6 | 81(19.61%) | 5 | 320(77.48) | 1 |
| Debre Birhan University | 257 | 4 | 91(35.40%) | 0 | 162(63.03) | - |
| DebreMarkos University | 261 | 8 | 128(49.04%) | 0 | 121(46.36) | 4 |
| Dire Dawa University | 375 | 4 | 105(28.00%) | 0 | 266(70.93) | - |
| Jijiga University | 384 | 4 | 86(22.39%) | 10 | 279(72.65) | 5 |
| MedaWolabuUniversity | 222 | 1 | 140(63.06%) | 0 | 80(36.03) | 1 |
| Mizan Tepi University | 404 | 6 | 134(33.16%) | 1 | 232(57.42) | 31 |
| Semera University | | | | | | |
| Wolaita SodoUniversity | 211 | 5 | 58(27.48%) | 0 | 135(63.98) | 13 |
| Wollega University | 528 | 7 | 204(38.63%) | 14 | 303(57.38) | - |
| Wollo University | 221 | 2 | 96(43.43%) | - | 115(52.03) | 8 |
| Total | 3276 | 47 | 1123 | 30 | 2013 | 63 |
| | (100) | (1.43%) | (34.27%) | (0.9 %) | (61.44%) | (1.92%) |

Source: Ministry of Education (2010b:144-277).

The profile of the staff in this set of universities can only be said to be substandard even in the Ethiopian context. Most of the staff (61.44 %) does not qualify for the teaching position they are currently holding. As Firdissa (2006:29-30) clearly put it, 'At the heart of universities' mission lies the learning quality of the students in which case the teaching staffs are the key work forces. This is because those who are responsible for its implementation can only assure quality'. The profile of the teaching staff plays a major role towards ensuring quality education. The current profile of the teaching staff in almost all ten public universities listed in Table 3 is far below the Ministry's requirement and much of the teaching is done by first degree holders. The universities are staffed by three times as many first degree holders than the maximum recommended by the Federal Ministry of Education. Had this been the profile of private higher learning institutions, definitely accreditation would have been denied.

Although the staff profile of the second set of public universities is better than the first group, it is still far short of the requirements recommended by the Ministry. As can be seen in Table 4, about 41.9 percent of the staffs do not qualify for the teaching position they are holding.

Table 4: Teaching staff in universities with average profile in 2009/10

| Universities | Staffs | Level of Qualification | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|------------------------|------------------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| | | PhD Degree | Masters Degree | MD/ DVM | Undergraduate Degree | Diploma and Others |
| Adama University | 776 | 53 (6.82%) | 349 (44.9%) | 15 | 359 (46.26) | - |
| Ambo University | 345 | 30 (8.69%) | 163 (47.24%) | 1 | 144 (41.73) | 7 |
| Arbaminch University | 789 | 41 (5.19%) | 257 (32.57%) | 5 | 484 (61.34) | 2 |
| Bahir Dar University | 1027 | 64 (6.23%) | 584 (58.85%) | 34 | 345 (33.59) | - |
| Dilla University | 528 | 16 (3.03%) | 272 (51.51%) | 14 | 173 (32.76) | 53 |
| Gondar University | 906 | 31 (3.42%) | 303 (33.44%) | 74 | 440 (48.56) | 58 |
| Haromaya University | 658 | 92 (13.98%) | 239 (36.32%) | 24 | 298 (45.28) | 5 |
| Hawassa University | 1110 | 80 (7.20%) | 486 (43.78%) | 15 | 515 (46.39) | 14 |
| Jimma University | 887 | 29 (3.26%) | 313 (35.28%) | 80 | 245 (27.62) | 220 |
| Mekelle University | 912 | 103 (11.29%) | 380 (41.66%) | 0 | 326 (35.74) | 103 |
| Total | 7938 (100) | 539 (6.79%) | 3346 (42.15%) | 262 (3.3%) | 3329 (41.93%) | 462 (5.82%) |

Source: Ministry of Education (2010b:144 - 227).

The staff profile of Haromaya University shows a large variation among faculties and programmes of the university. The profile of the College of Agriculture, for instance, is very strong whereas in other faculties and programmes it is short of what is recommended by the Ministry of Education. There are programmes staffed entirely or largely by first degree holders. On the other hand, out of 41 teaching staff in the department of Plant Science, 25 are Professors and Associate Professors. But generally, there is a lack of proportionate competent and senior teaching staff among faculties and programmes at all levels. Some programmes in Bahir Dar University are run largely by first degree holders and graduate assistants are teaching high loads even on first assignment.

The third set of public universities (actually one institution) with comparatively senior and qualified teaching staffs is the Addis Ababa University as depicted in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Teaching staff at the Addis Ababa universities in 2009/10

| Total No. of Staffs | Level of Qualification | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|----------------------|
| | PhD Degree | Masters Degree | MD+ and DVM+ | MD/ DVM | Undergraduate Degree |
| 1869 | 530 28.36% | 911 48.74% | 107 5.72% | 54 2.89% | 267 14.29% |

Source: Addis Ababa University (2011:27).

By 2010 Addis Ababa University had 1869 academic staff out of which seven percent were foreigners. Nearly half are Masters Degree holders, and about 28.4 percent have PhDs. Table 6 summarizes the profile of all teaching staffs in Ethiopian public universities by level of qualification and in comparison to Addis Ababa University.

Table 6: Summary of the teaching staffs in Ethiopian Public Universities in 2009/10

| | Staffs | Level of Qualification | | | | |
|---------------------------|--------|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| | | PhD (Terminal) Degree | Masters Degree | MD+ and DVM+ | MD/ DVM | Undergraduate Degree |
| 21 Universities | 11,214 | 586 (5.22%) | 4,469 (39.8%) | | 292 | 5,342 (47.63%) |
| Addis Ababa University | 1869 | 530 (28.36%) | 911 (48.74%) | 107 (5.%) | 54 (2.89%) | 267 (14.29%) |
| Total | 13,083 | 1,116 (8.53%) | 5,380 (41.12) | | 346 (2.64%) | 5,609 (42.87%) |

Source: Ministry of Education (2010a, 2010b); Addis Ababa University (2011).

The state of staff profiles particularly in the newly opened universities is clearly much inferior to the relatively senior ones. The current unsatisfactory profile of the teaching staff in public universities is strongly connected to the top-down reform which includes the reform regarding the hiring of teaching staff. One of the academic department heads, for instance, has the following to tell regarding the way universities claim and justify their right to hire teaching staff:

Previously, it was all the power of the respective universities and colleges especially in hiring staffs with first degree but now it is centralized by the Ministry of Education. As a result we are observing problems in relation to the maturity and quality of the staff. Because it is the university in general and the academic department in particular that know who is who on top of grades.

Institutional autonomy and academic freedom

The culture and practice of institutional autonomy and academic freedom are essential factors for the realization of the overall mission of higher learning institutions. Regarding the issue of institutional autonomy Article 17 of the Higher Education Proclamation No. 650/2009 proclaims that every public institution is granted the necessary autonomy in pursuit of its mission. This allows universities, among others, to 'develop and implement relevant curricula

and research programmes, select academic and other staff to be employed by the institution, nominate the president, vice presidents, and members of the Board, and select and appoint leaders of academic units and departments...’ (Government of Ethiopia 2009). Of course the Higher Education Proclamation has formally allowed public higher education institutions a limited degree of administrative as well as academic autonomy. Nevertheless it has been observed that there is a gap between rhetoric and practice. One can say that most public universities, especially those newly emerging ones, are ruled and operated under uniform day-to-day instruction from the federal ministry of education as if they all comprise a single university whose president is the Ministry of Education.

Historically there has always been competing views among scholars in Ethiopia regarding academic autonomy in higher learning institutions. Yizengaw (2003:3), for instance, attempted to compare and contrast the status of higher education prior to 1994 with that of the current EPRDF government. He argued for the superiority of the present context over the past in all measures including institutional autonomy and academic freedom:

Prior to 1994, due to the lack of any democratic right... little but critically scrutinized academic autonomy was practised by higher education institutions. This was expressed by top-down approach in areas such as curriculum development and adoption, staff recruitment... It was also the case that teaching staff were recruited/ appointed... by the government... [but currently under the EPRDF led Government]... the academic autonomy of institutions has been respected by the government and the regulatory body...

One cannot help but say that the message in this quotation is also a perfect manifestation of the current context of public universities in Ethiopia as well. Yizengaw (ibid:3) then went on to state his view that all public universities should be under the financial and administrative control of the MoE, and that institutional autonomy should be interpreted in relation to the party that controls resources. By implication, he is saying that since the government owns and controls resources it has the right to control and manipulate the activities of public universities. But this is fallacious because unless public resources are allocated to a public institution with the necessary autonomy and trust to achieve its mission, the allocation of resources hardly leads to productivity. Autonomy is a necessary resource for higher learning institutions if they are expected to contribute for nation development. Yizengaw’s (2003) conception of autonomy and academic freedom is a ‘macro’-level conception that reflects largely an African tradition.

There are two logically contradictory views about academic freedom, the ‘macro’-level and the ‘micro’-level. ‘Macro’-level principles emanate from how state resources ought to be accountably used and accordingly entails that academic freedom should be utilized solely for the sake of some concrete public good such as social justice and social responsibility. This view, therefore,

entails that a government-funded academic's responsibility is to be 'responsive' or 'relevant' to his/her social context in the way he/she teaches and researches. On the other hand, 'micro'-level conceptions of academic freedom include the idea that it can be proper to use academic freedom in order to discover and impart knowledge that is unlikely to foster a concrete public good, however, broadly construed. This view entails that academics at public universities have a moral prerogative to pursue 'knowledge for its own sake' (Metz 2010). To this end, one could logically ask whether or not the right of academic freedom necessarily is tied to a duty to promote the public good in concrete ways. A more libertarian conception (micro-level conception) of academic freedom according to Metz (2010:534), generally is that of 'the freedom of an individual academic from interference in the selection of what and how to teach and research, without regard to any specific or "closed" purpose (perhaps other than abiding by academic norms)'. Accordingly, academic freedom is the freedom of higher learning institution in general and individual academics working in the institutions in particular, from external as well as internal interference and influence in matters related, but not limited to who shall teach, what shall be taught, how to teach, whom to teach, what to research, and how to research.

The 'social responsibility' view of higher education (the macro-level conception) cannot understand and define academic freedom in isolation from accountability. Accountability in the exercise of academic freedom suggests that it is possible for academic freedom to be used irresponsibly. Truly speaking, social responsibility is an obligation and professional responsibility of academics, not a prerequisite for the right to academic freedom. The two are not a necessarily mutually inclusive web of social obligations. However, in the context of Africa, there are many reasons to recognize the intimate link between academic freedom and social responsibility (Metz 2010). Accordingly, Zeleza (2003:151) argued that defining academic freedom in terms of institutional autonomy from external intervention especially by the state and individual autonomy of professors from university boards and administrators without accountability and social responsibility is simply a Western tradition and does not work in the African context. In other words, African traditions dictate the emphasis for both institutional autonomy and social responsibility.

Radhakrishnan (2008:184-185) also argued that 'Academic freedom cannot be universal so long as education systems are not universal, inclusive and robust... In discourse on academic freedom it is important to make a distinction between developed and developing countries'. But making a distinction between developing and developed countries has little importance in such discourse. Although there are multidimensional variations among countries around the globe, those unavoidable socioeconomic as well as political differences cannot not justify defining and exercising academic freedom vis-à-vis developing and

developed countries. A discourse on academic freedom deserves a comparable status as discourses on human rights. Academic freedom is not necessarily a political freedom. It is a freedom of higher learning institutions and their academic communities aimed at achieving the purpose for which they are established.

To this end, the Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation No.650 /2009 Article 16 has the following to say about academic freedom: 'Every institution shall cultivate the culture of social responsibility in its academic community in the exercise of academic freedom' (Government of Ethiopia 2009). It is therefore apparent that this statement is in line with the macro-level conception of academic freedom and with African traditions.

There has been a tension between the desire of the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia to control public universities, and the reality that universities necessarily demand institutional autonomy and academic freedom to achieve their mission and objectives. This was apparent when the then Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Education, Yizengaw (2003:3), stated the following:

From historical times the definition of autonomy has lent itself to diverse interpretations and, even today, it frustrates the systems' internal operation unnecessarily. With universities being public institutions, but seeking to free themselves from certain common orientation and guidelines, it has become increasingly difficult for the regulatory body [the Ministry] to monitor and supervise the institutions under its purview.

In contrast, Zeleza (2003:160) in his critical analysis of the status and challenges of academic freedom for African universities affirmed that the overthrow of the Derge dictatorship in Ethiopia in 1991 did not guarantee academic freedom for higher learning institutions in the country. To use Zeleza's words:

In Ethiopia, the hopes that accompanied the overthrow of the Derg dictatorship and the end of the civil war in 1991, and the installation of new government were soon dashed. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) did not live up to its billing that it was guided by the principles of democracy, development, and minority rights. Assaults against academic freedom continued and, in fact, intensified.

Zeleza (2003:160-161) referred, among others, to the following two scenarios to validate his affirmation for the erosion of academic freedom in Ethiopia:

- (a) Independent thought was stifled through the denial of university autonomy and government control of activities of campuses;
- (b) The arbitrary dismissal of some 40 professors in 1993, the use of two-year contracts in faculty employment, the absence of tenure, the arrest of human rights activists, and the government's repeated failure to grant university autonomy through a charter (which it enjoyed when it was created in 1950 until 1974 revolution), and its control of all leadership positions, necessarily eroded academic freedom.

Baye (2008:57) critically compared and contrasted the practices of higher education during the Imperial, Derge, and EPRDF regimes, and concurs with Zeleza (2003) that the current system is no better than its predecessors as far as Addis Ababa University is concerned. He asserted that 'In all the three governments, the university [Addis Ababa University] has been viewed as a threat more than an intellectual ally. And a practical step taken by all three has always been keeping it at bay and silencing it whenever it get vocal with its thoughts, words of dissent, and practice'. He further added that:

Surly, the Emperor had tolerated a level of dissent within the walls of the university, which the succeeding governments failed to uphold, they see no wall between the university and the rest of the public... In all three governments, it has always been the political centre, not the University, that has claimed national authorship on the socio-political developments of the country and on the collective consciousness of the people.

Time and again Governments in Ethiopia claim exclusive ownership of reform agendas. They value control over autonomy and despotism over freedom to achieve the missions and objectives of public universities. Case studies conducted in seven relatively senior public universities (Forum for Social Studies 2008) indicated the presence and practices of some grains of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, but largely concluded that true and meaningful institutional autonomy was absent. On the other hand, the universities' ability to protect themselves from threats to their autonomy as well as intellectual authority coming from any other source had been reported to be low, and altogether absent when the threat comes from the Government. To this end, Zeleza's (2003:170) observation about the African context seems true in the context of Ethiopian public universities as well:

African universities have been characterized by authoritarianism, partly as a reflection of prevailing state authoritarianism itself and the fact that in many cases senior university administrators are state appointees, who in turn, appoint unit heads down the administrative hierarchy. University governance has often been characterized by a discretionary and top-down administrative structure, poor communication, and strained relations between administration and teaching faculty.

Wanna (2009:153) supported Zeleza's generalization and disclosed the absence of institutional autonomy and individual academic freedom in his case study report as follows:

Teachers generally have little voice in policy/decision making process although they are one of the key stakeholders in higher education and among the principal actors in quality assurance. The erosion of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, as exemplified by the top-down approach on policy and even curricular issues, has contributed to the marginalization of the teaching personnel [Translated from Amharic Language].

As opposed to the international trend of improved autonomy of higher learning institutions, the practice of university governance in Ethiopia appears not very different from its political tradition. Hence, public universities have suffered too much from unnecessary government intervention. As reflected in the current higher education discourses and practices in Ethiopia, it can safely be asserted that Ministry of Education has been needlessly challenging the idea and practice of autonomy and academic freedom that should have been instrumental for the overall identity of its own universities. Such perspective and ideology neither help the existing political system nor facilitate the implementation of the Government initiated reform agenda, but simply enhances a proliferation of submissive and non-responsive public universities in Ethiopia.

Concluding remark

Any reform of higher learning institutions that does not centre around the way knowledge is produced and how it is used and disseminated through teaching, increased use of technology in teaching, institutional autonomy, and academic freedom is to say the least nominal and has little contribution to advancement of knowledge and thereby to development. It has now become clear that there has been a growing mismatch between the expansion of higher education and available resources and facilities, leading to declining standards in the quality of instruction and research in Ethiopian public universities. Series of top-down reforms simply turned public universities into corporate institutions that treat students as clients. Corporatization in university is just the adoption of business model for the organization and administration of universities. It reinforces a market ideology, and the practices of bureaucratic authoritarianism, which curtail the culture of collegiality and general education on one hand, while it encourages managerial efficiency, and accountability to government on the other (Aronowitz 2000). The alternative is that Ethiopian public universities should ensure that their key task is to play a major role in developing critical minds, rather than degenerating into knowledge factories.

The prime factor affecting the quality of reform implementation in Ethiopian public universities is the Ministry of Education's excessive intervention and control that emanates from sense of absolute ownership of the reform agenda. This in turn lessened support for the implementation of the reforms, instead of staff playing their roles in accelerating them. The implementation process also fostered uniformity at the expense of institutional diversity. The Ministry has become unnecessarily busy by involving itself in to the day-to-day routine activities of public universities.

The quality of many of the teaching staff and of most students admitted to universities is questionable when examined against the quality output to which society aspires. The lack of trust between government and academia, and a lack of a sense of ownership of the reform agenda, together with the politicization

of educational development, constitute severe bottlenecks for quality higher education in Ethiopia. There is an obvious gap between the aspiration of the government initiated reform agenda and the reality of their implementation.

It seems valid to state that the quality of higher education in Ethiopian public universities is in crisis. It is therefore a high time for Ethiopian citizens, educators and policy makers to rethink their higher education agenda and direction. As education is a public property, the larger public in Ethiopia must question the policy and philosophy of education in general and that of higher education in particular. The public has the right to receive not simply higher education, but also quality higher education. Quality higher education by and large is a function of quality inputs and institutional as well as academic autonomy. Academic freedom allows universities to meet their responsibilities to society: promoting progress and cultivating democratic citizenship. University autonomy and academic freedom are essential instruments for the production of the critical social knowledge that facilitates material and ethical advancement. Ethiopian intellectuals and institutions of higher learning can hardly make meaningful contributions to the advancement of knowledge as well as to their nation development without true institutional autonomy and individual academic freedom. Accordingly, state control and suppression shall be relaxed. State policy needs to shift from control of universities to facilitation and supervision, from concern with process to concern with product, and questions of appropriateness of outputs to meet market demand.

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