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In Search of Sources other than Governmental in the Financing of Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Word of Caution Beyond the Gains

Touorouzou Herve Some*

Abstract

With the massification of higher education, the African higher education system is undergoing a profound structural crisis. The economic situation is not the only cause of the debilitating state of higher education in Africa. The African university is caught up in a dilemma: It seems to be left with little choice but to diversify the sources of its revenue, which means the necessity of introducing cost sharing. With this scheme, students and parents, especially, are expected to bear an important share of the cost of education. This article takes a look at the financial and management reforms adopted in some African countries in a bid to boost access, quality and efficiency. It documents the cost sharing measures introduced alongside its gains, then takes a critical look at the impact that revenue diversification might have on the mission of the university, the quality of learning and the community with the increasing commercial ordering of life. It suggests that African governments and university leaders resolutely look for ways beyond the financial and management policies to bail out their tertiary education systems. Building political consensus and adopting regional and continental strategies will go a long way toward creating sustainable institutions of higher learning.

* Ripon College, Ripon, U.S.A. Email: thsome63@yahoo.com

Résumé

Le système de l'éducation supérieure en Afrique est en train de subir une crise structurale profonde à cause de la massification. Par conséquent, l'université africaine semble n'avoir d'autre choix que de diversifier ses sources de revenus. Ce qui implique la nécessité d'introduire un système de partage des coûts de l'éducation. Cette étude jette un regard sur les réformes financières et de gestion adoptées dans certains pays africains. Elle documente les mesures de partage des coûts introduites et leurs gains. Aussi, l'étude jette-t-elle un regard critique sur l'impact que la diversification des revenus peut avoir sur la mission de l'université, la qualité de l'enseignement et la communauté confrontée à la tournure commerciale de la vie. Il y est suggéré que les gouvernements africains et les dirigeants de l'université recherchent résolument des moyens en dehors du financement et des politiques de gestion pour sauvegarder les systèmes de l'enseignement supérieur. L'étude suggère que créer un consensus politique et adopter des stratégies régionales et continentales aideraient considérablement à la viabilité des études supérieures.

Introduction

In the beginning, the modern African university was a success story. A single national university established for the training of human power for the much-needed bureaucracy of newly independent nations yielded commendable results (Court 1991). Today, fortunes are dramatically reversed. While the pressure from the expanding numbers of students, compounded by economic hardships, is a threat to quality education, the colonial legacy and the political mismanagement of the universities also act as the last straw that breaks the camel's back. Whoever the culprits, the most visible manifestations of the crisis have been the decrease in university budgets, which had led to decaying infrastructure, increasing unrest on university campuses, and mostly the questionable quality as well as the relevance of the training provided (Somda 1995:1).

The African university seems to be left with little choice but to diversify the sources of its revenue, via cost sharing (Johnstone 1986, 2000, 2004; Ishengoma 2004; Some 2006; Ngolovoi 2008). Cost sharing expects students and parents, especially, to bear an important share of the cost of education. This article takes a look at the financial and management reforms adopted in some African countries in a bid to boost access, quality and efficiency, and it advocates a more integrative approach to the sustainability of higher education institutions.

The Massification of Higher Education in the Midst of a Deep Recession

Austerity in higher education has become a universal phenomenon, assailing all countries, poor and rich alike. Massification – often accompanied with a ballooning student population in Africa and in inverse proportion to the state budget capacity of weak economies – a phenomenon that is a common trait in higher education in virtually all countries, has magnified this austerity:

> Enrolment growth has outpaced financing capabilities. Africa has maintained its public investment in higher education over the last fifteen years, allocating approximately 0.78 per cent of its GDP and around 20 per cent of its current public expenditure on education to this sector. However, during this period, the total number of students pursuing higher education tripled, climbing from 2.7 million in 1991 to 9.3 million in 2006 (annual average rate of 16 per cent). The situation is even more dire in the poorest countries in Africa (approximately 9.63 per cent of their GDP is allocated to higher education), where during the 1991-2006 period the number of students quadrupled while available public resources have, in general, only increased at most by 75 per cent (Haddad 2010:7).

The unit cost of higher education outpaces the annual inflation rate, hence the notion of cost disease (Johnstone 2001). In sub-Saharan Africa, though, the austerity is a galloping one:

> [T]he woeful economic situation of most African countries during the 1970s and 1980s has meant a steady dwindling of both externally and internally sourced financial resources for the universities, resulting in funding levels which cannot match, in real terms, the requirements of critical inputs, equipment, books and journals, to sustain acceptable standards of instruction, research and service (Adams, Bah-Lalya and Mukweso 1991:349).

This situation is fraught with consequences. Adams et al. conclude that the prolonged period of deep austerity of the 1980s:

> … has shifted the focus of the policy debate on education from a paramount commitment to human resource development to the present painful preoccupation with finding ways of financing it. Moreover, these pressures on the education sector are felt at a time of strong social demand by a generation of youth whose rising expectations are matched by their commitment to political activism (p. 349).

The plight of African universities is inversely proportional to the euphoria born out of a marked sense of nationalism, following the tide of the independences in the 1960s. Sawyerr (2003) contended that the African states took upon themselves 'a decisive leadership role' for the social and economic transfor-

mation of the newly independent nations. While this is not exclusive to African nations, the African situation has been unique with regard to 'the degree of specificity and narrowness in which the purposes were stated in some instances and the generosity of the public support to the new universities' (Sawyerr 2003:4). African universities were tasked, among other things, with serving revolutions, socialist economies, nation building or African unity. It follows, still according to Sawyerr, that the state alone shouldered all the costs of higher education, at the taxpayers' expense.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Universities in sub-Saharan Africa are desperately searching for alternative sources to mitigate the rising costs of higher education against the background of diminishing public monies, ironically at a time of competing needs: health care, agriculture, roads, primary education, etc. Solutions to eke out the limited budgets of the different states seem to be confined to revenue diversification to the detriment of African solidarity. Thus, African universities risk missing out on crucial fronts: The Humboldtian spirit consisting of the search for truth conditioned by *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit* (Clarke 1985); effective teaching; the idea of service to the community; economic development and the formation of a strong civil society. Equally important is the promise of the idea of university as the great equalizer, mitigating the intergenerational transmission of privileges. In this article, I use a theroretical framework that articulates caveats related to the financing of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa. While Johnstone (2002) does not reject university entrepreneurship, he perceives three downsides to it that invite caution. The risk of stealing faculty and institutional time is real, especially if the countries do not have what is called, euphemistically, very clear rules. The second danger is that the entrepreneurial activities can easily be at loggerheads with the professional ethics prevailing in academe:

> This can occur ... when a funding source has a vested interest in the results of the research that it is funding. The compromise of academic values does not need to be so blatant as the outright falsification of evidence or suppression of findings. The very decisions of what to investigate (and perforce what not to investigate) can be affected by funding sources with vested interests – including government agencies. Alternatively, the academic compromise can come in the form of limitations on dissemination of the findings (Johnstone 2002:31).

The third limitation of entrepreneurship is that since all the departments do not have the same marketing power, some may not benefit equally from the spoils, so to speak (Sawyerr 2003), especially in the absence of clear rules. Varghese,

in a similar vein, worried that the laws of the market could rule supreme, given that 'the role of the state is not confined to funding. There are other roles centring on appropriate balance between social demand, governmental regulation and social equity' (Varghese 2000:20). The World Bank joined with Varghese in voicing a cautionary note. 'Markets require profits and this can crowd out important educational duties and opportunities' (World Bank 2000:15). Financially strapped governments notwithstanding, the analytical dichotomy entertained by some stakeholders between public good and private good is of little service. The debate on education either as a public good or its matching piece, education as a private good, is finally unproductive. Sawyerr (2003) blames two factors that contributed to the view that education was first and foremost a 'private good': the internal economic meltdown and external policy pressure.

The result was the reduction of public expenditure on Africa's universities in real terms, especially in terms of the unit costs per student, and the extension of the policy of cost-recovery to higher education. Government appropriations to universities were often slashed to the bone; also, subsidies for students were reduced or removed altogether (Sawyerr 2003). Sawyerr takes a dim view of 'narrow economistic bottom-line considerations of efficiency and value-for-money [that] have tended to get lost in the shuffle – sometimes with the explanation that those purposes could be addressed as economic conditions improve – a version of the "trickle-down" theory' (Sawyerr 2003:39). He bemoans the fact that in the 1980s and early 1990s, African states and most donors deserted the financing of higher education, which further precipitated its dilapidation.

There is the danger that the university could be narrowly and exclusively conceived of as a place of the 'production of skills for the job market', thus forfeiting the long-term interests of society that 'are best served by the university as a thinking and learning place' (Sawyerr 2003:44). As a matter of fact, universities have been trying a good many measures as they face the daunting alternative of 'adapt or die' induced by the economic crisis. In the wake of this, faculty have become past masters in moonlighting and veritable bounty hunters of unending consultations, quite understandably to make ends meet, their wages being a mere pittance. In this case, teaching and research no longer occupy the centre stage. Ghost universities with ghost lecturers can only precipitate the descent into the maelstrom of mediocrity. Also, several university administrators try to hook private sources to eke out the meagre state appropriations. The authorities, cognizant of this situation, sometimes appoint university leaders, not on the basis of their academic track record, but rather on how well they can hold out the begging bowl (Sawyerr 2003).

Method

I have selected one case in African higher education that points to discernible patterns of success, although caution is needed here, especially after this university has hit rock bottom in the quality of its educational output, starting in the 1970s: Makerere University in Uganda. In addition, I have included two cases that point to possibilities and that are worthy of note as instances where the policy has been more or less accepted by students, faculty and staff (although it is too early to establish how successful they are) Kenya and Tanzania. Finally, there is the case where cost sharing was implemented from top down and that is still subject to student contestation such as the University of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso (West Africa).

I have gone to great lengths to review the World Bank policy concerning the financing of higher education in developing countries with a special attention to sub-Saharan Africa. The reason is that the World Bank is rightly or wrongly perceived as the originator of cost sharing in higher education in Africa. A detailed literature about the position of the World Bank on the financing of higher education in Africa was necessary in order to place the reader in a position to better understand matters. I have come to this research from multiple locations. As an African, as a former graduate from a francophone country, where the introduction of tuition is rather a novelty and is adamantly fought by students, and also as a scholar of cost sharing who studied for 'free'. This offers me a particular vantage point for understanding the need for cost sharing, but also the imperative of looking beyond financial and management reforms to salvage the African university that is going to wrack and ruin in several countries.

The World Bank and the Financing of Higher Education in Africa

It is hardly imaginable to discuss the financing of higher education in Africa without taking a look at the World Bank' s involvement, at least at policy development level. The Bank has often occupied the limelight for the almost explicit hostility towards higher education in Africa throughout the mid-1980s until the end of the 1990s as a result of both declining government resources and the international focus, mainly guided by the policy prescriptions of the Bank, on primary education (Youssef 2005).

Its view on higher education has evolved from the 1980s to the 2000s so that it is now more appreciative of government investment. Yet, it is still calling for greater efficiency and greater cost sharing. Thus:

> Twenty years ago, the *Education Sector Working Paper* (World Bank 1974) began the process of emphasizing the importance of primary and basic (including non- formal education) and urged the raising of the proportion of education lending to this sector (from 11 to 27%) and, in consequence,

reducing the proportion going to higher education (from 40 to 30%) (King 1995:20).

The Education Sector authored by Psacharopoulos (1980) made the case that the rate of returns to primary education was higher than that of higher education. This comforted the Bank in its neglect of higher education to the benefit of primary education. In 1985, Hinchliffe noted in *Issues Related to Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, that higher education was not sustainable because of high unit costs (ten times higher than the per capita income and worse still, 50 times higher than primary education); the under-utilization of facilities, oversubsidization of students from privileged backgrounds, not forgetting the high non-teaching costs (King 1995). *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization and Expansion* (1988) diagnosed that African higher education institutions needed capacity-building. This sub-sector was lacking in the appropriate mix of inputs; was of low quality; entailed high costs with inequitable and ultimately inefficient finance. As a medicine, the World Bank advocated cost sharing in the form of developing private higher education institutions and charging fees in the public sector. As Youssef (2005) put it:

> By advocating privatization and user fees, private resources could be mobilized, reducing government spending on higher education so that funds could be allocated to the bolstering of primary education which enjoyed greater rates of return (pp. 20-21).

Thus, the 1988 report took a dim view of the financing of higher education in Africa and urgently recommended the reduction of the public costs per student by cutting down the non-teaching costs that are unusually high and the student subsidies, and by introducing tuition charges as well as providing fewer subsidized services and student stipends.

In a nutshell, adjustment, revitalization and selective expansion became the order of the day. Youssef (2005) unpacking the terms adjustment, revitalization and expansion, had this to say:

> While expansion included making the necessary investments towards the long-term goal of universal primary education and revitalization focused on issues of academic standards, the centerpiece of the policy package was adjustment which directly addressed the issue of cost as a means to both cut government spending and redirect funds to the provision of primary education (p. 20).

Changing its instrumental approach to higher education during the 1990s, the Bank, as Yepes (2006) put it:

> [B]egan paying attention to broader political-economy aspects and relying on positive incentives to the actors. More recently, together with UNESCO, the Bank focused on poorer countries while placing higher education in a broader context of life-long learning, using info-communication technologies when possible (p. 25).

In 1994, *Lessons of Experience* tempered the power of the rate of returns analysis that justified the recommendation to reallocate resources from higher education to the lower levels of education. Given the methodological limitations of that approach, and the importance of higher education for producing the professional and technical specialists required by each country, the report called for increased Bank attention to the needs of higher education institutions (World Bank 1994:94).

At the same time, the Bank advocated the differentiation of higher education institutions, the diversification of finance, the redefinition of the role of the state in higher education, and the focus on quality, equity and responsiveness.

Much more recently, in *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promises* (2000), the World Bank observed portentously that the developing world is at risk of lagging behind in a world economy more and more dominated by knowledge. 'As knowledge becomes more important, so does higher education. ... The quality of knowledge generated within higher education institutions, and its availability to the wider economy, is becoming increasingly critical to national competitiveness' (World Bank 1994:9). Such an observation does not bode well for developing countries in general, and more narrowly, sub-Saharan African countries. The reason is that '[t]hey are chronically underfunded, but face escalating demand. ...Faculty are often underqualified, lack motivation and are poorly rewarded. Students are poorly taught and curricula undeveloped' (World Bank 1994:10). The World Bank grimly concluded that at this rate, development is in jeopardy.

The World Bank encourages a new vision coupled with careful planning and high standards of management. It has identified three areas where immediate action is necessary: funding, resources and governance. It is required of public funding a more consistent role, and students, institutions, business and philanthropy will do well to join hands. Calling for an optimal use of human and physical capital, the Bank encourages the development of new technologies of communication and the integration of developing countries into the global intellectual community. However, all the efforts can be meaningful only if located within an enabling environment of good governance. On its own, the World Bank (1994) admits that better management is supposed to 'lead to more effective deployment of limited resources'.

The *Task Force* argued that counting only on public funding for higher education leads to a blind alley. Government funding levels depend on govern-

ment resources. Private financing contributes to alleviating the charges of governments who can devote the resources to other needs:

> The financing of higher education does not need to be limited to the public purse. In fact, higher education can be provided and financed either entirely publicly, or entirely privately (including by non-governmental organizations), or by some combination of the two (World Bank 2006:55-56).

The World Bank actively supports several countries in the reform of their higher education systems. At the joint conference in Accra, Ghana, in September 2003, it reaffirmed its commitment to revitalize the higher education systems in Africa, which points to the softening of its former position with regard to higher education:

> Noting that 'the Bank does not have a very strong credibility around higher education', Birger Fredriksen, the Bank's representative, reassured participants that the Bank 'would like to strongly support higher education in Africa' (Teferra 2004:1).

In *Constructing Knowledge Societies* (2002), the Bank explains why continuing public support for higher education is necessary while addressing the appropriate role of the state, as well as how to diminish the adverse effects of reforms. It had promised its support to the tertiary education institutions in the developing countries, and now emphasizes a comprehensive approach rather than the heretofore area approach:

> Through effective partnerships with other multilateral institutions, national governments, NGOs, and the private sector, the World Bank aspires to apply its financial resources and extensive knowledge base toward increased efforts in the tertiary education and science and technology sectors, which will help create the foundations of democratic, knowledge-based economies and societies (World Bank 2002:99).

In order to minimize dissent within the institution, the Bank favours consensus building and solutions adapted to each society through effective management and financial modalities.

A Few Management and Financial Solutions Tried Out in Universities in Africa

Measures akin to 'internal efficiency and cost-saving arrangements' (Sawyerr 2003:45) have been implemented in several universities. A considerable amount of outsourcing of municipal services such as telephones, electricity, cleaning services, etc., has taken place. The practice of user charges has also seen the light of day as well as the development of technical training and distance edu-

cation. Universities are more sensitive to the demands of their constituencies, and so develop courses that address the 'here and now' situation of the job market. As part of the innovations, they have developed strong links with business 'as a means of providing service to the community, raising income for the universities and providing hands-on experience for students' (Sawyerr 2003:45-46). The student cafeteria, photocopying and transcripts, among others, are no longer free in many universities.

Financing Higher Education in Burkina Faso

In 2006, the total number of students enrolled in public higher education institutions in Burkina Faso was 30,472, with a projected value of 75,200 students in 2015, or a ratio of 2:5 (World Bank 2010). The average annual expenditure is 37.23 (2004 US $ millions) against 23.1 for the resources available. The University of Ouagadougou, the flagship university in the country, started in 1974 with 370 students. Virtually all students who completed high school automatically benefited from a grant that was relatively generous (Guenda 2003). This grant has been merit-based since the 1990s and amounts to CFA 500,000 per student and per year.

The government had to reduce student benefits drastically as the country was going through structural adjustment programmes in 1991. A quota system was introduced based on a cutting-point at the high school exam, the *baccalauréat*. To sugar-coat the pill, *l'Aide*, a financial assistance equivalent to CFA 150,000 per year (renewable twice) was given to students who did not qualify for the grant. In 1994, a student loan programme, the FONER to a value of CFA 150,000 upgraded to CFA 200,000 in 2007, was set up for students in their third year and upward. The rate of recovery is poor. Minimal collection and other issues have set the scheme up for review, according to the World Bank (2010). In effect, in 2009, only 20 million CFA have been recovered out of the more than 15 billion loaned since the beginning of the programme. In 2007/2008, 2,233 grants were allocated to students against 21,620 students who benefited from the financial aid, and 3,862 for the loans.

The tuition is of a dual-track type with students at elite public institutions paying up to 1,800 euros. This does not include room and board. Tuition fees, then, constitute up to 50 per cent of institutional income in these elite institutions (World Bank 2010). Already, in 1992, with the first attempt to reduce student grants and install *l'Aide*, students went on rampage. Landmark student protests about their financial conditions are the Year 1997, 2000, 2002, and 2008. The FONER political acceptability can be measured by the refusal of students to pay back, even after they have graduated and have been gainfully employed.

In 2002, the tuition fee that was 7,500 CFA doubled to 15,000 CFA ($75), causing student riots. But before, in the year 2000, a protracted student strike

led to the cancellation of the academic year. It ushered in the reorganization of the University of Ouagadougou. What is known as the *Refondation* is a top-down management process that was supposed to increase academic outcomes and bring a better articulation between programmes and employment opportunities. It was not a consensual policy as it involved less than ten percent of the university instructors and did not seek or was not in a position to garner student input at all. Whether the *Refondation* has achieved what it set out to do is still not clear, judging by the recurrent faculty and student strikes. These have seriously disturbed academic activities. The academic year that normally starts in October has been put off many times to January, sometimes even later. There is the risk of running a second-hand higher education system that will jeopardize the badly needed human capital formation.

Students resent the financial and management measures adopted by the Ministry of Higher Education, as they encroach on their well-being. At the University of Ouagadougou, Korbeogo (1999) argues that several students are in a situation of dire poverty. They engage in parallel activities such as petty trading, private tutoring, and as 'escorts' for female students, to meet the vital minimum, given the material precariousness in which they live. The hardships include the difficulty in feeding themselves and transportation, as many of them live downtown, far away from the university. The same hardships have been documented by Some (2006) who describes the bulk of the student body at the University of Ouagadougou as mired in crass poverty, leading them to fall back on their parents whenever possible. The low socio-economic family background of the majority of students makes it difficult for them to expect the support of their parents. As Korbeogo mentions:

> Unfortunately, the social origin of the people surveyed shows the very limited capacity of parental response in poor families where the father is often the only bread-winner who provides for the material and financial needs of the children. For in some cases, the students who are scholarship holders become providers of income to the families (Korbeogo 1999:54).

To survive, they are obliged to run into debt. Worse still, they indulge in acts of stealing. They steal bikes, and do not pay their way into the Restaurant Universitaire, the student cafeteria, as not all of them can afford the ticket. Elaborating on the grim student living conditions, Korbeogo shows that many students are obliged to come together to rent small rooms in twos or threes, sometimes more: 'Thus divided between his studies and fighting for his way out, the academic results of the student will be on the decrease, which is a factor of attrition' (Korbeogo 1999:54).

Guenda (2003) also captures a grim image of the student conditions at the University of Ouagadougou as they toil through the material hardships largely imparted by the reduction in the number of grants and other social advantages. He deplores the fact that many students suffer from hunger. This reduces their

attention span and makes the assimilation of lectures difficult. As Woodhall (2002) maintained, cost sharing can only be successful if there is a student loan scheme that allows students to defray the cost of their education. Paradoxically, student loans have a track record of failure all over the world (Altbrecht & Ziderman 1991). This pattern of failure points to the social, cultural, political and technical difficulties encountered by student loan schemes.

The Experience of the University of Dar es Salaam

At the University of Dar es Salaam, the difficulties facing higher education have come to the fore as a public concern too. Stakeholders, through workshops and seminars, have agreed to take the bull by the horns. In order to bail the university out, it has been decided to implement new management and financial reforms. The new vision for the university aims at a transformation as the changes are profound, holistic and systematic rather than isolated (Luhanga & Mbwette 2002). The management and financial reforms are best seen as two moments of the same dynamic. They work in tandem even if the financial reforms draw heavily on the management reforms.

The financial reforms include the implementation of the University Finance Management(UFM) study of 1993-1996; the computerization of financial operations; the establishment of the UDSM level of external finance administration unit (EFAU); the computerization of external finance operations (multi-currency); the implementation of the financial information system (FIS) as part of the INFOPOL project; the diversification of sources of funds; the introduction of a formula for internal allocation of the Government subvention; the rationalization of services; and staff retrenchment. The goals of the management reforms are:

- Implementation of the new organizational structure of positions of UDSM;
- Enhancement of the strategic planning culture;
- Clustering of faculties and institutes into campus colleges;
- Rationalization of services (municipal and support services);
- Implementation of income-generating and cost cutting measures;
- Establishment of Companies;
- Enhancement of third party investments;
- Establishment of regional admission centres;
- Introduction of smart campus cards for students and staff (Luhanga & Mbwette 2002:103).

All these measures aim to streamline the university system and make it more efficient, responsive to its clientele, sensitive to the community, faithful to the search for truth and knowledge production, and cost-effective. In a nutshell, this fits into the vision of a sustainable university. Measures directly in tune

with the revenue diversification concern the rationalization of services, Enhanced Income Generation and cost- cutting, and the formation of companies. The rationalization of services is undertaken to reduce the cost of delivery of academic programmes (Luhanga & Mbwette 2002). Private investors have supplanted the university in the provision of municipal services such as cleaning, maintenance and catering:

> In general, it has been decided that the university will never be directly involved in offering such services to the university community. The only other major service that is currently still directly provided by UDSM is the health services undertaken by the UDSM Health Centre. A proposal for its rationalization with the view to reducing costs and also enhancing its income generating potential is now under discussion (Luhanga & Mbwette 2002:100).

The rationalization of the services has tremendously reduced overhead costs. For example, with the layoff of administrative and technical staff – as unfortunate and wrenching as it was – the student and administrative staff ratio that was 1:2 in 1994 has gone down to 1:8. Also, income-generating activities are seriously considered at UDSM. Third party investors are assiduously wooed to take over commercial spaces on campus. The forum convened in May 2001 at Dar es Salaam, targeting local and foreign investors, is a watershed in the desperate search for sources other than governmental in the African higher education landscape. The UDSM, very serious about it, has gone as far as setting up two companies wholly owned by the university. These are DUP Ltd. and UCC Ltd. The intention is to ensure that the facilities are operated commercially and do not in any way cost the University any funds. In any case, the ultimate goal is to see these companies offer subsidized services to UDSM in a sustainable way by generating income through their commercial activities (Luhanga & Mbwette 2002:101).

Cost sharing was introduced in Africa's education policy in the 1980s for public as well as private universities (Oketch 2003). What is taking place in Tanzania is not an isolated case.

Kenya

Tuition fees are crucial in the policy of cost sharing. The fact that sub-Saharan Africa has relied on tuition-free higher education has wrought enough havoc regarding access, participation, equity and efficiency. Yet, the annual average rate of enrolments in African public universities is estimated at 7.5 per cent. It is therefore not reasonable to think that the state can continue to finance education all alone, especially when the students take excessive numbers of years to complete a degree. Demographic factors, national economic performance, the distribution of income, donor funding and level of external debt, patterns

of previous provision and social demand, all militate for a shift of major costs of education to students and parents:

> Standard models of public funding, for example, tend to imply a transfer from the rich to the poor. However, empirical evidence ... and new theoretical work ... show that free higher education implies a transfer from lower income groups to higher income groups (Oketch 2002:89).

In order to preserve access, many researchers have advised the introduction of student loan programmes to allow most students to fund their education. However, as broached earlier, '[m]any countries have had ... problems because their loan schemes have not been delinked from government current expenditures, budgeted annually as part of education allocation' (Oketch 2003:99). This speaks volumes for the difficulties besetting loan programmes. The 1974 Kenyan loan programme was just a grant, and even a bad grant with its minus 3 per cent recovery rate (Some 2008). The Higher Education Loan Board (HELB) set up in 1995 immediately ran into problems. Eligibility criteria were not fraud-proof and students from wealthy families were said to be automatically granted the loan as it was very difficult to verify the validity of documents submitted.

Today, the situation has somewhat been addressed. Oketch makes the point that loans should be set up in such a way as to absorb all fees and living costs. He thinks that most of the failure of loans comes from inadequate capitalization. 'When loans are insufficient, they cause learning setbacks because they do not serve their purpose. One of the reasons for the resistance of loans in many sub-Saharan African countries is that the amount given to students and institutions is insufficient. They cannot fully cover the needs of students' (Oketch 2003:100).

Mwinzi (2002) documents the havoc wrought by the impoverishment of students as a result of inconsiderate cost sharing measures at the University of Nairobi. He finds the financial assistance to the students far from adequate. The Kenyan Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) set up subsequent to the introduction of cost-sharing 'has been faced with many financial and administrative problems and as a result, it is not in a position to provide adequate loans to the increasing deserving applicants' (p. 2). Consequently, students are indulging in income-generating activities (IGAs) that are at loggerheads with learning. Several students are reported to be involved in drug and illicit alcohol selling, cohabiting and prostitution.

If African universities are intent on diversifying their sources of finance, care must be taken not to allow the corporate idea to deflect them from the traditional mission of a university. I shall elaborate on this idea in due course. As seductive as the American model of financing higher education may be,

Africans must pay attention to the specificity of their countries. In this sense, while borrowing sound educational practices experimented elsewhere, they must not forget to look inward in order to wrest endogenous solutions based on African solidarity. This is the place to caution African universities, which seem to have embraced the Bologna Declaration all too enthusiastically, against endorsing unexamined borrowing. That there are roadblocks in the way to endogenous solutions must not throw African leaders into a self-defeating paralysis. The search for an African solution seems to be a sustainable way to go about Africanizing the university that desperately remains a European idea transplanted into Africa.

Makerere, a Beacon of Hope, but For How Long?

One innovation, particularly bold as well as imaginative is

> … the reservation of space at public universities for fee-paying students. This has happened at UCAD in Senegal, the University of Ghana and the KNUST in Ghana, and some of the universities in Kenya. However, the best known of all have been the dramatic developments at Makerere University over the last ten years (Court 1999:47).

All these miscellaneous measures have gone some way to contain non-educational overheads. Once again, Sawyerr points out that francophone Africa has been at great pains to implement cost-containing measures which, no doubt, affect students and faculty's gains. The experiment under way at Makerere, assuredly, deserves to be expanded upon if only because of its originality, novelty and boldness.

Ng'ethe et al. (2003), in an attempt to conceptualize innovation in higher education in Africa, after a laborious deliberation – quite understandably because the term is rather an import from business – proposed that it is '… the planned implementation or application of new ideas, practices and services, which arise through creativity, interaction and insight, with the aim of improving an existing situation, practice or service, and thereby bringing about change' (p. 18). It follows that what took place at Makerere University is nothing short of an innovation. Makerere has not always been the respectable higher education institution that it is today, poised to enter the pantheon of the best higher education centres in Africa; it has not always enjoyed the relative financial autonomy that it has now, as it hitherto relied quite exclusively on government funds not always forthcoming.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the university struggled to exist, owing to political and economic instability. This turbulent period saw a number of both senior expatriate and Ugandan lecturers leave for 'greener pastures' and 'exile respectively' (Ssebuwufu 2002:87). Thanks to a broad-base management style

and bold administrative, academic and financial reforms, the Makerere University overhauled a dilapidated university system:

> At Council level, inclusive representation and authority by all stakeholders has been introduced. The new Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act now provides for election of the members from among the University staff, whereas in the past, the council was primarily composed of government appointees. Council will now include representatives from the business and industrial sector. The consultative and participatory management maximizes the involvement of different segments of the university community. It encourages participatory decision-making (Ssebuwufu 2002:87).

Ssebuwufu has relevantly remarked on the fact that student and staff protests have been dramatically reduced because of the open channel of communication. As a result, the university is expanding in quality and resources, compared to most campuses on the continent. It has successfully diversified its revenue sources and somewhat shifted the burden of education from exclusive government provision to parents, students, business and partners in co-operation. Thus, it has made the desirable possible and the possible come true. The fees charged new students have been a crucial element of this positive change:

> Makerere has with this increased income instigated major improvements in the physical and academic infrastructure. The increase in the internally generated revenue within the university has been significant. In 1996 the income generated was Ush.5.07 billion. In 1999, it increased to Ush.10 billion, representing an increase of 100% (Ssebuwufu 2002:91).

Makerere has introduced cost sharing measures with great success – although this achievement should be celebrated cautiously (Sicherman 2008; Sawyerr 2004; Mamdani 2007) – thanks to the transparency that has constantly accompanied the process. The sense of belonging and ownership from the part of all the stakeholders has minimized the distrust between the administration of the university and the other stakeholders. The university has been able to keep afloat financially, and to its credit, it has resorted to a policy of shared prosperity. The faculty members have seen consistent increases in their salaries:

> The contribution to the salary/wage bill is about 1.5 billion per annum, whereas before 1996, the university contributed nothing. As a result of the improving terms and conditions of service, the university has been able to attract and retain its high caliber staff in all faculties, and to reduce the high turn-over that it used to experience during the seventies (Ssebuwufu 2003:1-10).

The university seems to husband the financial resources more or less providently. A number of funds have been set up. Among others, the Makerere University in-House Pension Scheme extends to all the employees. The eight per cent deducted from the total revenue generated has already insured a 15-year monthly pension. Here, cost sharing is protecting the workers' pension scheme, contrary to the Ghanaian student loan scheme covered by the Social Security and National Insurance Trust fund (SSNIT) that threatens to deplete the workers' pension (Some 2008; Kotey 2003). The Makerere University Staff Development Fund (four percent) is used for higher training of faculty. There is also a Maintenance Fund (five percent) to prevent the physical plants from running down. It is incongruous to invest in costly physical plant if there is no plan to maintain it. Research has not been forgotten with a Research and Publication Fund being set up. Perhaps, more important to an environment of peace and quiescence is the attention devoted to students. So, all the stakeholders understand where the money generated through the efforts of all parties to cost sharing is spent and with what effect, thus reinforcing the legitimacy and 'unavoidability' of cost sharing.

Makerere could inspire more than one university. It is instructive to note that Makerere points to real possibilities in terms of revenue diversification in cash-strapped countries, a situation magnified by a stark opposition to cost sharing. This case is a clarion call to action. It instils a new sense of hope and shows that poor African universities can implement some form of cost sharing. Makerere has broken this circle of apparent moral and material inescapability.

In Court's rendition of how to provide funds other than governmental revenue for a sinking institution in an African context, Makerere University in Uganda diversified its revenue to become an example to be emulated by most African universities:

> Few universities attempted, and none succeeded, in redistributing the cost of tertiary education to providers other than the government. Countries that tried to introduce cost-sharing faced violent confrontations with students. ... These confrontations tended to persuade nervous governments to return to the status quo (Court 1999:3).

The secret of Makerere has been the far-reaching financial and administrative reform, the optimal use of facilities, and especially, a dramatic increase in fee-paying students. 'In the space of five years, Makerere has moved from a situation where none of its students paid fees to one where 60 per cent do' (Court 1999:3). In the year 2003, over 80 per cent of the students admitted on a yearly basis were privately sponsored. As Ssebuwufu (2003) observed, this falls in line with the 1989 Educational Review Recommendation and World

Bank Initiative, which strongly recommended that students share the burden of the costs of their university education.

The pace at which it all occurred is nothing short of a 'Quiet Revolution' as Court put it. To account for this, he pitched his argument at the level of a confluence of factors nested in a supportive external environment and an innovative institutional context. Interestingly enough, Court underscores the consensual aspect of the reform:

> Reforms, while urgent and radical, were not sprung upon the public of the university in a sudden unexplained manner, as a *diktat* from above in apparent response to external pressure. ... Rather, they occurred in a long process of negotiation, consultation and explanation both within the university and outside it (Court 1999:11).

Among the favourable factors then were the existence of an enlightened university leadership who believes in the virtues of the market, the political stability coupled with the government's readiness to grant the university autonomy, and not the least, the macro-economic reform that has made possible steady economic growth.

Yet, whether the current achievement of Makerere University is sustainable is a matter of debate. Musisi and Muwanga (2003) lament the insufficient facilities and the insufficient staff resulting from the unexpected expansion of enrolments and the subsequent fall of standards; the uneven improvement in faculty gains; the poor living conditions of students; and the worsening of the gap between haves and have-nots as a result of the dual-track system. It is not even up to its Africanness that has not been called into question by some. In Sicherman's (2008) view, 'a history of an African university seems impossible without a definition of "African university" as 'the conventional development model sees an African university as run by Africans, centrally ... devoted to increasing knowledge of all aspects of Africa, and graduating high-level personnel to staff local institutions' (p. 19). Just because a university is located in Africa does not make it an African university. Sicherman, continuing with her word of caution, has this to say: 'Makerere is accused of commercialization, an abandonment of planning on national need and academic competence in favour of short-term responses to a crudely defined market' (p. 32).

A Case for Sustainable African Universities

As seductive as revenue diversification might sound, it may not be enough to overturn the low quality of universities caused by the scarcity of funds and to bring peace and quiescence on campus. It would barely suffice to construe

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the falling of standards and quality in the African university as merely a problem that could be fixed if only the financial resources were forthcoming and sound management arrangements were out in place. Granted, money is the sinews of war. But even so:

> Ensuring financially sustainable tertiary education policies and constraints proper to each country, various measures, such as student flow orientation, cost-sharing, rationalization of social expenses, improvement of governance and management practices, and private sector development, may be used in combination to achieve an optimal balance between economic requirements and financial resources that may be mobilized (Haddad 2010:9).

Culture, organization and action are crucial here. This is in no way an attempt to make light of the fiscal issue. Once again, the point is that the crisis of the African university cannot be reduced to financial and budgetary dimensions. Revenue diversification runs into to serious obstacles in Africa, poverty aside. Among other issues, means-testing is difficult to implement and loan collection problematic, as borrowers are often not easily tracked down (Some 2006; Ngolovoi 2008; World Bank 2010). Student loan programmes are also not functional and often do not put enough money into the hands of students. It is not quite clear whether students regard these loans as real loans to be paid back. Philanthropy, at least in the way it plays out in the West, is nearly non-existent (Johnstone 2008). Cost sharing, therefore, seems to be a difficult concept to implement in the African context. Policymakers and decision-makers are wise to be well aware of the ecological factors of the African society in their crusade to build sustainable tertiary education institutions on the continent.

It is arguably the case that the financing of higher education in Africa can only be effective if embodied in a vision that goes beyond mere budgetary and financial issues. It has become public knowledge that:

> Very few countries in Africa have room to increase public funding to tertiary education. Even though the African percentage of GDP per capita dedicated to higher education (0.7%) is below the world average (0.84%) it would be difficult to increase public resources considering the very narrow fiscal base in most countries and the needs from other sectors of the economy, in particular in a context of financial crisis (Haddad 2010:9).

The paradigm of cost sharing seems to work in developed countries with their culture of credit rating, tracking individuals and their revenues through their social security numbers, and the possibility for students to find gainful employment during summer (Johnstone 2004). As pertinent as cost sharing might

be in sub-Saharan African countries, the missing link in the picture is the mis-recognition of the socio-political, cultural and historical context of modern Africa. Sawyerr counsels ‘very thorough and realistic assessments of history, material circumstances, political/economic conditions and prospects, against the general background of global movements...’ (Sawyerr 2003:30). The continent was balkanised and a strong sense of micro-nationalism is still present, where regional synergies are long overdue (Haddad 2010). These synergies need not be a slavish copy of the European initiative in higher education. Unfortunately, Africa comprises 52 states, all big on their sovereignty.

As said in the opening lines of this article, the university was a symbol of national pride and all states made it a point to have theirs, whether this university was viable in and of itself or not. In any case, one has to deplore the fact that regional integration in higher education has barely scraped the surface of political discourse. Consequently, the duplication of programmes in neighbouring countries does not allow for economies of scale. Africa, this vast continent, has also differentiated economic possibilities. While a university should primarily serve the community in which it is founded, it should also pay attention to geography. For example, it would be less productive to have an agricultural university in a desert just to make the citizens feel good about the way they think of themselves as a people. Pooling regional forces together to make consolidated mightier institutions seems to be the best way to go.

To mitigate the inadequacy of the budgetary/financial model – however well-thought out it is – as the panacea to the sustainability of African higher education, one must integrate the political and organizational dimension. African societies are highly politicized, with universities being hotly fought-over battle grounds. Politicians have learned to use universities as their Trojan horse in order to gain a political innings. That is where ruling parties and opposition alike go poaching for soldiers for their cause. In this case, even if students always have real cause to show down against material conditions, they are conditioned to do so, and this creates a volatile situation. Coupled with the fact that governance is the steward of transparency in the management of public affairs and the husbandry of the meagre resources of the country, conditions that are often absent or insufficient, one can foretell that no matter what financial resources could be mobilized for universities, and no matter how well students were treated, university unrest will have come to stay with us as long as consensus-building among the different actors of the university has not been made a priority. To build a sustainable higher education system in Africa, Sawyerr (2003) warns that there are no easy choices, counselling government and the donor community to steer clear of ‘one- sided, simplistic, usually economistic prescriptions for dealing with hugely complex problems’ (Sawyerr 2003:30), implying that social consensus is the *sine qua non*.

Conclusion

Higher education in Africa has reached a crisis point. This sounds trite. Universities are being thwarted in their mission by an ever-bulging student population at a time of dwindling resources. This is magnified by a worldwide financial austerity that has always kept the African economies in the doldrums for too long. Whether prodded by the World Bank or on their own, African governments have launched cost-cutting measures that are located on the continuum of drastic reduction in the number of grants; gradual introduction of tuition fees where higher education used to be free; some increase where students were already paying for their studies; and student loans.

Governments have also enlisted the contribution of philanthropists and business. If the desperate search for the diversification of revenue to achieve more efficient institutions of higher learning is laudable and, perhaps, is no choice left, the pristine mission of the university should never be lost sight of by the different stakeholders. There is a sense in which the search for supplemental resources could crowd out the idea of a university, as certain trends in most reforms are troubling. Privatization altogether of higher education poses a threat to access and quality. The outsourcing of certain services to people who may only abide by the commercial ethos is infelicitous. Mamdani (2007) has aptly elaborated this concern in *Scholars in the Marketplace: The Dilemmas of Neoliberal Reforms at Makerere University 1989-2005*.

Not only could the neoliberal reforms be a bar to access for the majority of students; and worse still, a bar to opportunity to learn, they could also corrupt and subvert the very idea of a university. Also, one avenue often neglected in the search for sources other-than governmental to finance African higher education, is regional cooperation. Several programmes from different universities in the sub-region could come together in a single country, depending on the geopolitical and economic possibilities. Duplication of the same programmes in neighbouring countries seems improvident and is downright insensitive to the notion of the economies of scale. It also ignores the comparative advantages of countries.

Although revenue diversification is a difficult concept to apply in the African context, it can be more effective only if the Augean stables of African politics are cleansed, giving rise to consensus-building and sound governance that reassures most actors that the common good is the *summum bonum* of financial and budgetary policies. Experton and Fevre (2010) advise that, with regard to the difficulty of implementing financial reforms, some caution be exercised: 'Social assessment of the proposed reforms through wide consultation is necessary to build consensus among the diverse constituents of the tertiary educational community, while allowing for a high degree of tolerance for controversies and disagreements' (p. 9). In other terms, cost sharing, or

revenue diversification writ large, can be allowed to stay its course if it comes in draped with legitimacy. It will accomplish what it sets out to accomplish if embedded within local, regional and continental synergies. The nascent concept of an African University (Haddad 2010) points in a good direction. On the whole, reforms should make it a priority the fact that the university is a place for reflection and the development of ideas (Sawyerr 2003). Therefore, it is deplorable that 'the focus has tended to be less on the substance and core of the university enterprise, namely, curriculum, pedagogy and research, and more on funding, governance, management, access, equity, etc.' (p. 26).

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