

Transformation and Continuity in the University in Africa

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Overview of “The University in Africa” symposium, University of Cape Town, 21 Oct 2006.

A key stage in the path of transformation is a broadly-founded reconsideration of the core purposes of the university – the generation of new knowledge through scholarship and research, and the transmission of such knowledge through teaching and learning, and through the network of relationships that connect the university with wider society. While many universities face challenges of adjustment to a changing world, and these challenges are often acute in Africa, the transformation agenda for universities in South Africa has particular characteristics that are part of the broader processes of social and economic reconstruction after apartheid. These issues have promoted, and will continue to promote, many-stranded conversations. A contribution to these debates was made by a colloquium at the University of Cape Town, in November 2006 which combined positions from within South Africa with those from Zimbabwe, Botswana, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, the West Indies, the United Kingdom and the USA. The pages that follow summarize and interpret the positions that were offered and developed at the colloquium.

“Transformation” is a broad term, and there is a danger that its practical value as a concept is inversely proportional to the breadth of its use. For convenience, we can conceptualize institutional transformation as two, mutually reinforcing domains.

On the one hand are practical necessities, hard but easily calibrated, and underpinned by legislated imperatives. This domain includes moving towards equity in student recruitment and enrollment, correcting for prior and continuing discrimination and disadvantage through academic development programmes, and aiming for student graduation profiles unbiased by race, gender or social class. This domain also includes setting and achieving appropriate objectives for employment equity and ensuring the renewal of the university’s intellectual capital such that there are no arbitrary or unfair barriers to the best people building careers in the university if they so wish.

On the other hand are the less tangible, but equally important, aspects of transformation; the traditions, symbols and customs of daily interaction that, together, constitute institutional culture, and the ways in which knowledge is conceived, constructed and transmitted. This essay is focused on this last aspect – on what Tony Bogues calls “epistemological transformation”. But these domains remain part of a whole and inseparable in their unity.

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A key stage in the path of transformation is a broadly-founded reconsideration of the core purposes of the university – the generation of new knowledge through scholarship and research, and the transmission of such knowledge through teaching and learning, and through the network of relationships that connect the university with wider society. While many universities face challenges of adjustment to a changing world, and these challenges are often acute in Africa, the transformation agenda for universities in South Africa has particular characteristics that are part of the broader processes of social and economic reconstruction after apartheid. These issues have promoted, and will continue to promote, many-stranded conversations. A contribution to these debates was made by a colloquium at the University of Cape Town, in November 2006 which combined positions from within South Africa with those from Zimbabwe, Botswana, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, the West Indies, the United Kingdom and the USA. The pages that follow summarize and interpret the positions that were offered and developed at the colloquium.¹

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Universities are complex places, and consideration of transformation requires broad and intense consultation and discussion and engagement with myriad interests. Lecture-rooms, seminar-rooms and laboratories are sites for research and teaching by many distinct academic departments, each of which has varying traditions and practices of enquiry and complex networks that connect with similar disciplinary

¹ The full set of contributions, as well as a report on the debate and other supporting sources, are available at www.transformation.uct.ac.za, and are on file in the African Studies Collection of the University of Cape Town Library.

² Anthony Bogue, “University in Africa”, www.transformation.uct.ac.za, and this volume.

conventions across the world – the “invisible colleges” about which Paul David has written.³ When these interests are combined with the complexities of relationships with external stakeholders, it is apparent that these aspects of institutional transformation are particularly demanding, and not amenable to easy management solutions.

It would also be unwise to assume that to re-examine the mission and core purposes of the university is to presume that these will, or indeed should change. Several contributions to this colloquium work to the premise that a desirable outcome of the transformation of present conditions would be to reassert, and to return to, the “classic” university models of scholarship. It would be equally unwise to assume that the category “the University in Africa” has anything more than a heuristic value. Indeed, why should a university in Senegal be grouped with a university in South Africa rather than, say, a university in Mexico? This said, transformation in the university has been a matter of debate since Kant engaged with the King of Hanover in 1798. Derrida, in interpreting and extending Kant’s argument, sees the strength of the university in its irreconcilable contradictions, a point to which I return at the end of this essay. In the meanwhile, and however diverse their perspectives, participants in the Cape Town colloquium found plenty to argue about.

The complexity of issues of transformation was set out by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in its recent call for proposals on the theme “Higher Education in Africa: Transforming Within, Preparing the Future”.⁴ CODESRIA noted that many see universities as irrelevant to contemporary issues, but that these critiques are often shallow, and fail to take account of either the historical complexities or contemporary circumstances of universities in Africa. CODESRIA noted that the serial crises that universities have faced have, in themselves, generated adaptive strategies and responses that need to be taken seriously. These strategies and responses need to be combined with an understanding of the new regimes of globalization. In responding to such circumstances resources, and the ways in which they are used to influence and direct university work, is critical to the processes of knowledge production, with implications for academic freedom and knowledge dissemination. There are multiple stakeholder interests: families and students from different social backgrounds; teaching, administrative, and technical staff; policymakers from within and outside the higher education sector; public and private employers; donors.

CODESRIA notes that, over the past twenty years, proposals for the transformation of universities in Africa have ranged from initial World Bank proposals that universities should be dismantled, to the opposite view (also from the World Bank) that universities are essential to development, and to proposals for new institutional forms that include specialized technical institutes, private universities, and virtual universities using satellites and the Internet for delivery. Within South Africa, the 1996 report of the National Commission on Higher Education heralded a decade of restructuring which has involved closures, incorporations and mergers, and the emergence of a new institutional type, the University of Technology. South Africa’s

³ David, P. (1998). Communication norms and the collective cognitive performance of ‘invisible colleges’. *Creation and transfer of knowledge: institutions and incentives*. G. B. Navaretti, P. Dasgupta, K.-G. Maler and D. Siniscalco. Heidelberg, Springer-Verlag: 115-163.

⁴ CODESRIA “Higher Education in Africa: Transforming Within, Preparing the Future”, January 2005.

restructuring exercise, carried out in the name of transformation, stands of one of the most ambitious attempts on record to re-orient an entire national higher education system.⁵ These whirlpools of re-evaluation, uncertainty and reformation are ineluctably linked to the history of the university in Africa, a point stressed by Paul Tiyambe Zeleza in his recent work, and in this volume.⁶ Zeleza maps the depth and richness of advanced knowledge production in Africa, and the productive interplay of indigenous knowledge systems, monastic traditions, Islam, Western liberal traditions and post-colonial scholarship. His overriding message is, perhaps, the danger and shallowness of solutions proffered in response to the emergencies of immediate circumstances.

How to achieve focus in mapping out a discourse through the complex issues of such transformation? A point of entry is provided by Calestous Juma's argument for the "developmental university", which has been influential in shaping the approach of the United Nations and other agencies. In essence, Juma argues that universities in Africa can no longer afford their conventions, and must rather become "engines of community development", working directly with the communities in which they are located. This will require new relationships with governments, academia, business and civil society, far reaching reforms in curriculum design, teaching methods, student recruitment and admission and the location of campuses. In particular, Juma sees a need for a close working relationship with the private sector. Juma's vision is of revitalized knowledge creation and deployment within Africa, and for Africa, in which the continent is at the "frontier of institutional innovation": "nothing less will meet the challenges".⁷ Juma's position on the university in Africa is provocative, and intended to change the terms of the debate about the use of knowledge in development. In the University in Africa symposium, and in the positions that follow here, contributors return to Juma's arguments, if more often than not arguing against his assumptions and recommendations.

Resources and the Nation

In considering the University in Africa, and the potential for either reasserting its traditional values or transforming them, a first theme is that of resources – the day-by-day reproduction of the institution – and the relationship that resourcing brings with the nation. As is well known, and as the CODESRIA overview of challenges facing higher education in Africa identifies, this is a key issue for many universities, and several participants in the symposium used their direct experience to make the point. Elom Dovlo (this volume) writes of "a coma of financial deprivation which swept most of the continent for almost three decades", although he feels that the situation in Ghana is now improving. For others, the resource crunch is felt most severely in staffing, diminishing the ability of universities in Africa to attract and retain good academics and administrators. Thus Alinah Segobe (University of Botswana, and this volume), feels that "the current mismatch between resources distribution (financial, infrastructure, and human) needs to be revisited with a view to prioritize intellectual development in Africa". Ibrahima Thiaw (University of Cheika Anta Diop, Dakar, and this volume) links the underlying issue of resource provision with other elements of transformation, seeing a syndrome of increasing student numbers, declining resources and the consequent impossibility of improvement:

⁵ references

⁶ Zeleza book

⁷ Juma, SciNet and other references

For Thiaw, the responsibility for correcting the shortage of resources rests unambiguously with government, a view shared by Dovlo. Dan Izevbaye (formerly University of Ibadan, now Bowen University, Nigeria) connects the problem of national funding of higher education with the notorious structural re-adjustment programmes of the World Bank. He argues that Africa has no dearth of imagination and creativity. The problem is rather that these opportunities are denied by the weight of external forces. This, he argues, is shown in the history of the university in West Africa. Following independence, the university was crushed by structural readjustment and the consequences of currency devaluation, which rendered books and equipment unaffordable. As a result, the investment in staff development merely equipped West African academics to attain jobs in the west and the north once they were forced out of Nigeria by the lack of resources. This created a lasting tension between academics who remained in Africa, and those who became part of the diaspora (an issue discussed later in this essay).⁸

The material requirements of bricks and mortar, computer equipment, electricity supply and reasonably competitive staff salaries underpin the continuity of the university as an institution. While this issue has yet to have anything close to comparable severity in South Africa as in some other countries in Africa, public funding of higher education is declining across the globe, and can nowhere be taken for granted. With the exception of private universities, this issue of resources invariably involves the relationship between the university and the state. As Paul Zeleza's overview of higher education in Africa shows, the contemporary university in Africa is closely implicated in the creation and history of the post-colonial nation state.⁹ However, the diminution of funding from this state can render this relationship a poisoned chalice. Nana Wilson-Tagoe (currently with the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) argues that, while the university should still be seen as a national institution, this should be countered by independent sources of funding: "the old system in which universities were funded entirely by governments and therefore totally controlled by presidents and military leaders would be transformed if universities found independent sources of funding".¹⁰

There has, of course, been a great deal of discussion about the relationship between the state and the higher education system in South Africa, given the decade long restructuring exercise that has taken place. Elsewhere, it has been pointed out that, since the passing of the Higher Education Act in 1997, the South African state has consistently tightened its control over the higher education system, diminishing the autonomy of individual institutions in the interests of a national system that can be steered in the national interest.¹¹ This issue was picked up by Lungisile Ntsebeza at the University in Africa symposium. For Ntsebeza, the challenge for a university is to find ways in which it can both continue to do what it does well, and at the same time

⁸ See the full symposium report at www.transformation.uct.ac.za for the debate on this issue.

⁹ Zeleza references

¹⁰ Wilson-Tagoe, this volume

¹¹ Martin Hall and Ashley Symes, "South African Higher Education in the first decade of democracy: from co-operative governance to conditional autonomy". *Studies in Higher Education*, 30 (2): 199-212, 2005.

open up its resources for those who are marginalized and excluded – finding ways to meet the requirements of the state.¹²

Nevertheless, the tension between the resource needs of public universities, on the one hand, and the interests of the state in either national universities, or national university systems, remains. Behind this tension is the probability of compromises and trade-offs for, despite the hopes of some participants, it seems unlikely that the nation will come to its senses and increase the resources to universities without a price.

Unpacking Development

A second theme is the interrogation of the concept of “development”: in this respect, Calestous Juma is a particularly valuable *agent provocateur*. For some, the discourse of development, with the implication that, in contrast with Africa, the north and the west are “developed” is a reinscription of subordination. As Sam Raditlhalo (English Language and Literatures, UCT) put it at the University in Africa symposium, “whose development, and for whose benefit? Development is an abused term since it suggests a lack, a deviance from the norm. Development Theory itself comes into being as a result of having displaced the colonizing theory, to repudiate the notion of ‘civilizing the barbarians’ ...”. I will return to this line of interpretation later when I consider epistemological issues. Others, while of course fully aware of colonialism and its consequences, take a more pragmatic approach, seeing the problems that Africa faces as an overriding emergency. This is the spirit of Alinah Segobye’s position (this volume), when she writes that the African University should respond to the major development challenges facing the continent today.

Positions such as these move beyond Calestous Juma’s assumption that there is a clear, uncontested, development agenda. The issue, of course, is whether unpicking the history, assumptions and implications of development politics and practices is essential to moving on, or whether it is a self-interested debate, inclined to the arcane, and of the sort that has encouraged the argument that the university is no longer relevant to key challenges such as healthcare, universal standards of education, food security and the eradication of poverty. In this regard, one danger signal is when discussion reverts to simple opposites: “applied research” versus “pure research”, “relevance” versus “blue sky”, “academic” versus “practical”. Such simplistic binaries present the danger of shunting the concept of the university back into a siding as the freight train of intervention and action rumbles on by.

One way of moving forward here is to think in terms of the axis that binds the institution of the university to the world. This is not the old opposition between the “local” and the “global”, because it is now well recognized that the two are coterminous, particularly in the life of a university. As Ibrahima Thiaw puts it in this volume, as with any other university around the world, “African Universities are key institutions for the production, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge for advancement and betterment of humanity. Universities are also part of a global and local environment with which, they interact, and respond in multiple ways”.

The complexity of the relationship of the community of the university and the global world of scholarship comes through in the relationship between the university in

¹² University in Africa, www.transformation.uct.ac.za.

Africa and the continent's intellectual diaspora. Dan Izevbaye (this volume) makes the point that we cannot understand the role of the university in Africa without taking account of this factor. In his view, concepts of Africa from "outside" are "domesticated" for the rest of the world by diasporic Africans, who are both beneficiaries of the opportunities available to them in the north and west, and victims of continuing prejudices about Africa. Indeed these very opportunities, and prejudices, are rooted in the colonial domination of Africa, and are mediated by a general reordering of boundaries and flows in a still-unfinished process of globalization. In such a fluid set of circumstances, the false certainties of binaries would indeed be dangerous.

Izevbaye criticizes those who see knowledge about Africa as better developed and disseminated within the diaspora, rendering those who have stayed behind as a sort of intellectual underclass. This would make those in the diaspora both the agents and the victims of the West. Nana Wilson-Tagoe (this volume) responds by pointing out that diasporic scholars have worked hard to change the discourse of Africa across the range of the disciplines. She argues that universities should tap their resources and invite their collaboration instead of seeing them negatively as "unpatriotic deserters".¹³

All this said, most agree that the resources of the university are directly applicable to local and immediate needs, and need to be deployed appropriately – arguments developed at the University in Africa symposium by both Alison Lewis (Engineering, UCT) and Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan (Zoology, UCT).¹⁴ Putting such knowledge-based interventions into effect in the service of pressing local issues raises two, inter-related dimensions – the nature of the appropriate agency, and the characteristics of the knowledge that can be used to best effect.

As far as agency is concerned, some participants in the University in Africa symposium argued for new forms of institutional relationships between university and community. Ibrahima Thiaw, for example, stresses that scholars need to get close to their communities and build mutual trust. The university needs to interpret the global for such local communities, respecting and supporting the strength of local cultures. For others, however, the notion of community-as-agency is more complicated. John Higgins (English Language and Literatures, UCT) argues that the concept of "community" needs to be unpacked. The need to offer service to the community is constantly repeated in discussions about the role of the university in Africa, creating the illusion that, presently, universities do not provide services to the community. But is this the case? One of the key functions of the university is to replicate professional classes, and universities are constantly doing this already. The push for "service to the community" may put at risk the other central functions of the university.¹⁵

Ways of Knowing

This leads into consideration of the forms of knowledge that are most likely to bring direct benefit to communities, thereby contributing to the immediacies of the development agenda (even while the political legitimacy of this agenda is questioned). In Higgins' example, communities will benefit through access to the professional

¹³ See the colloquium report for full discussion on this point: www.transformation.uct.ac.za

¹⁴ University in Africa, www.transformation.uct.ac.za.

¹⁵ University in Africa, www.transformation.uct.ac.za.

qualifications offered by a university – a particular form of knowledge transmission. Alinah Segobye (this volume) makes a similar point, arguing that the university can no longer afford to be perceived as a place of higher learning and ideas divorced from the needs of the African citizenry. But for others there is a danger in Elom Dovlo's vision of "domesticated knowledge", or Alinah Segobye's metaphor of learning and ideas bonded with the needs of an African citizenry. Maano Ramutsindela, Vanessa Watson, Melvin Ayogu and Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan each present the counter-view that local needs are best served by the universalist concept of knowledge that is the distinctive signature of the traditional university.¹⁶

There are, then, tensions along the axis that connects community with the world – the imperfectly understood organizational structures that could meld ivory tower with township shack, and the nature and extent of the knowledge that can best serve the pressing consequences of social and economic marginalization - the "development agenda" that many see as too important to be left to university-based intellectuals. These come together in the incomplete consideration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Universities in South Africa have been slow to internalize the debate about Indigenous Knowledge Systems, succumbing too easily to caricatures such as "African Physics" or the use of beetroots to counter HIV. However, Ibrahima Thiaw (this volume) argues that it is sad that scholars in Africa are generally more informed about research, technical and theoretical innovations and publications in Europe and North America than they are about current research and scholarship in Africa.

It is still not clear how indigenous knowledge can be integrated into the broad intellectual project of the university. Bella Mukonyora (this volume), a Zimbabwean scholar currently with Western Kentucky University, points to specific dangers of misappropriation, as in the case of the politics of Shona identity, where indigenous knowledge claims have been used to support political violence. She writes that the categorization of knowledge as indigenous can accentuate marginalization by denying students a critical and comparative understanding of the world at large. If, however, an awareness of indigenous knowledge is incorporated into a comprehensive knowledge system, the outcome can be liberatory.

It is clear that the Community/World axis is a complex zone where the university, as a "world institution" engages local structures (some of which are still conceptual), where Africa-based intellectuals (full members of global "invisible colleges" of academic life) contemplate the opportunities and challenges of compatriots in the diaspora, where diasporic intellectuals are on the frontline of expectations and prejudices in the North and West, and where indigenous knowledge is incompletely mapped out as a post-colonial (and post-apartheid) system, and imperfectly integrated with other ways of knowing (if, indeed, there is really any difference).

Epistemic Decolonization

Positions on necessary resources, the relationship between university and nation, local community and the world of scholarship and the antinomies of the diaspora invariably invoke the nature of knowledge itself. Whether a practical matter of being able to afford journal subscriptions or a conceptual issue, such as the definition of

¹⁶ See the full report on the University in Africa symposium for these positions: www.transformation.uct.ac.za.

indigenous, the university is a “knowledge organization”, as much virtual as concrete, and with the core purposes of creating new knowledge through scholarship and research, and disseminating knowledge through teaching and application.

Of course, there is nothing here that is specific to the university in Africa and no reason to assume that all universities in Africa are the same, as Lungisile Ntsebeza and others emphasised at the University in Africa symposium. It is rather that a pervasive sense of crisis attenuates these issues – the threats to the very existence of the university as an institution that were articulated by CODESRIA, or the interminable restructuring of the South African higher education system. Will the state continue to support national universities and public higher education systems, and will this be at the price of surrendering control over the way in which knowledge is shaped? What would be the trade off, in terms of directions in research and teaching, for seeking alternative resources from the private sector, or from donors? How should inquiry be structured in the face of extreme social and economic issues – poverty, AIDS, the collapse of education systems, war and genocide? What to do when there is a one-way flow of graduates out of the continent, denying a return on the intellectual investment in the next generation of scholars? For academics in universities in the north and west, these are conceptual possibilities, useful in rhetorical struggles but unlikely to come to pass. For academics in many universities in Africa, these are realities, and the ways in which epistemology becomes manifest in struggles for the day-by-day reproduction of the institution.

The intersection of the instrumentalities of teaching and learning (libraries, computers, adequate classrooms, suitably qualified staff), the organization of fields of knowledge (the definition of disciplines), the reproduction of human capital (the provision of qualifications) and concerns with ways of knowing (epistemology) is the curriculum of the university. Curriculum is a neglected concept in analyses of higher education, and is often treated as little more than the student rule book or the sequence of courses required to graduate. Here, the concept of the curriculum is taken as having a broader etymology – the comprehensive organization of the “knowledge enterprise” that guides and empowers teaching, learning and research. Curriculum is to the university as aerodynamics is to the aeroplane, or recipe is to the chef.

For Bella Mukonyora (this volume), the complex of issues around local and global knowledge, the social value of education, and the application of knowledge to key social issues come together around the design of the curriculum. Lungisile Ntsebeza endorsed this approach at the University in Africa symposium, noting that a curriculum that is initially informed by local experiences and concerns is a matter of perspective rather than parochialism: “by focusing on the concerns, needs, interests and priorities of South Africans, particularly the historically disadvantaged, we can engage with the global in such a manner that we advance our needs and interests rather than those of the “North” and the rich”. Insisting that the curriculum is grounded in this way is to recognize that knowledge is invariably embedded in a context – Alison Lewis’s point that Engineering curricula apply general principles to local problems. It is also to recognize that knowledge is, in some way, socially constructed. As John Higgins puts it, “practical knowledge is everywhere embodied in cultural practice – specifically linguistic, but also corporeal and gendered, and obedient to social rules that are likely to be both conscious and unconscious, poised, as it were, just adjacent to and in practice overlapping with, the realm of pure

knowledge. .. In reality, this means that few of the world's problems – from AIDS to Overpopulation and Climate Change – are amenable to exclusively scientific and technological resolution". It is already apparent that, rather than a simple matter of rules and procedures, curriculum is complex territory that is likely to be contested. Recognizing this, Brenda Cooper argues transformation of the curriculum requires understanding the ways in which knowledge in Africa has been constructed across a range of discourses.¹⁷

The question of the social construction of knowledge is, of course, a vast field of debate with many unsettled issues and it would be hubris to attempt to resolve the issue here. However, and whichever perspective one takes, knowledge is imbued with power and the shaping of the university's curriculum is political. This is so whether the issue is general (for example, Ntsebeza's point about engaging with the north) or internal to the institution (for instance, Cooper's point about the need for a critical understanding of the ways that different disciplines shape knowledge). Any discussion about transformation and the curriculum has to take account of the politics of such "knowledge practices". The point can be made through a limit case. To argue that, say, theoretical physics is a form of pure knowledge unaffected by the context in which the field is researched or taught is to place the practitioners of the discipline at one university in a particular and defined relationship with the practitioners of theoretical physics at all other universities. This is an assertion of authority over a field of knowledge, with implications for accountability, and is therefore a political position. Consequently, the claim made for pure knowledge, unaffected by context, is as political as, for example, a practitioner in the social sciences who sees all knowledge as socially constructed. Positions taken and argued during the University in Africa symposium opened up the politics of the curriculum in several rich and provocative ways.

Firstly, Natasha Distiller and Jane Bennett wrote about key issues in understanding and transforming patriarchy and gender, drawing out points that are touched on less substantially by a number of other participants. Distiller sees the university as uniquely placed to both understand patriarchy, and to guide interventions that will have a transformative effect. She sees this as an open ended process, as a living curriculum of questions, answers and more questions: "if knowledge is itself the product of complex systems of investments, disavowals, and desires, even as it in turn helps to shape the systems from which it emerges, then there will never be one truth about how and why patriarchy operates, or one answer. There will only ever be a series of questions, and none of this work will ever be innocent of what has, at various times in our disciplinary histories been called politics, ideology, hegemony, or discourse, amongst other things". Bennett sees such issues as manifest in the daily life of the institution itself, where misogyny continues despite progressive policies, driven by competition for resources and disciplinary authority within the academy.¹⁸

A second, related, line of thought is what Tony Bogue (formerly University of the West Indies, currently Brown University) terms "epistemic decolonization", a process that starts with the curriculum, with "confrontation within disciplines themselves". This set of concerns is with the ways in which the curriculum may reproduce pre-

¹⁷ See the full report for these positions: www.transformation.uct.ac.za.

¹⁸ University in Africa, www.transformation.uct.ac.za.

conceived categories of thought, often in the name of “standards” set in the west or north, that subordinate other ways of knowing. The persisting unease with Calestous Juma’s position on “development” falls into this area; while Juma is unambiguous in calling for the regeneration of the university within Africa, he is at the same time calling for an “African curriculum” that is practical and applied, reserving by implication theoretical and conceptual intellectual work for places such as Harvard. Bogues’ critique acknowledges that such epistemological subordination is not necessarily imposed from outside – we often do it to ourselves.

The point here is not that a choice has to be made. No one at the Cape Town colloquium was arguing that Western philosophy, or Shakespeare, the Impressionists, modernist architecture or Galileo’s contribution to science have no place in the curriculum in Africa. The point is rather that epistemes of Africa must be as embedded in the curriculum of the university in Africa as, for example, the critical study of American history is embedded in the curriculum of every good US university, or the central place of French literature in teaching and research at the Sorbonne. In Jane Bennett’s words:

“To suggest that African universities have a peculiarly ‘developmental’ set of responsibilities (as opposed to – say – Harvard University) is to risk reinscribing African-based philosophers, scientists, poets, and researchers into a relationship fundamentally oriented towards the interests of those who ‘under-develop’, those who name some zones rather than others as ‘in urgent need of social problem resolution’, and those who draw rigid, impenetrable, distinctions between the sophisticated dance of theory and the messy-but-worthy conversation of application.”¹⁹

Thirdly there is the unresolved issue of language and the question of whether epistemic decolonization can be achieved when the language of research and teaching is not the mother tongue of the majority of students and scholars in the university. Again, this is not a matter of crude choice. English is a lingua franca of scholarly communication (although by no means the only one), and universities in Africa would disadvantage their graduates if they were unable to take the full role in the “invisible colleges” of scholarship that require a common language. In his contribution to the University in Africa symposium, Mbulungeni Madiba (Centre for Higher Education Development, UCT) recognized this complexity:

“Language remains one of the major obstacles in the link between the African university and its community, the academia and the masses. African universities have despite the end to colonialism, and apartheid in the case of South Africa, remain committed to the use of foreign languages such as English and French as the mediums of education. In fact, up to now, there is no university in sub-Saharan Africa which uses an African language as a medium of education in discipline other than language ... The move towards multilingual higher education in South Africa, and perhaps in Africa as a whole, is highly recommended if the dream of “an African university for Africa” is to be realised. ... The big question, however, is how can multilingual education be practically implemented in African universities. There is no easy answer to this question.”²⁰

These three sub-themes – patriarchy, epistemic decolonization and language – begin to show how the question of the curriculum can be opened up, both within and

¹⁹ See the symposium report for this argument in full: www.transformation.uct.ac.za

²⁰ www.transformation.uct.ac.za

between disciplines. At the heart of this issue is the relationship between the Humanities and the Sciences – the two “formative domains” in the contemporary university.

Joe Muller sees a gulf here, arguing that “the two styles of knowledge commerce are thus fundamentally different. When scientists say, for example, that they feel alienated by Humanities talk, what alienates them is the intellectual project of disputation and critique as an end in itself. They are fundamentally puzzled because, where their allegiances lie, the intellectual project is about cumulative integration at a higher level of synthesis, disputation in the service of higher agreement. To risk trivialisation: where the Humanities do critique, the sciences do equations and flowcharts. Mutual misrecognition and mutual alienation should not be surprising”.

In contrast, John Higgins holds out the hope of reconciliation. Higgins points out that scientists are at the centre of policy issues, including the application of knowledge to the goals of transformation, but feel alienated from the critical discourse about such policy. Humanities scholars, on the other hand, have the analytic tools to understand policy discourse, but are marginalized when it comes to funding or full participation in matters of application. Where Muller sees this mutual exclusion as paradigmatic, Higgins sees a void that can be filled by what he terms “advanced literacy”: “it is this failure of recognition that results in a situation in which ... both scientists and humanists feel alienated from a higher education policy whose central and focus is science and technology alone, but the only mediating element in which serious discussion can take place – historical and theoretical analysis – apparently belongs to the humanities and social sciences. What is repressed in current policy formulations – the centrality of the skills of advanced literacy, which should figure alongside and as a part of any emphasis on science and technology – returns as a double alienation in which scientists and humanists have no place to meet”.²¹

Implications for Transformation

The issues raised and debated here help to map out a future discussion about the transformation of the curriculum, as understood as the nexus at which epistemology intersects with the material requirements and practical organization of teaching, learning, research, and the application of knowledge.

A first point to note is that attempts to transform the curriculum are never easy. This is because the university is built out of multiple contradictions and diverse interests. This was apparent to Immanuel Kant, whose 1798 essay, translated as “The Conflict of the Faculties”, shaped Von Humboldt’s concept for the University of Berlin, widely recognized as the prototype for the western research university. Kant mapped out tensions between the university and the state, and further tensions between what he termed the higher and lower Faculties, and which would today be recognized as the Humanities and the Sciences, on the one hand, and the professional and vocational disciplines, on the other. Derrida engaged with Kant’s ideas in 1980, as part of a process of self-reflection at Columbia University. This – and other – literature reminds us that there are no easy fixes.

²¹ See www.transformation.uct.ac.za for these positions in full

Derrida's essay is a reflection on the nature of responsibility, as it pertains to the university, and is relevant to continuing debates on this issue twenty-five years later. Derrida shows how the university is a place of multiple contradictions. In addition to the conflicts that Kant identified are others that have become more significant since the late eighteenth century: the conflict of interest with external research bodies that tend to marginalize the work of the university; "businessmen of knowledge" who seek to organize what the university does; and the language in which knowledge must be articulated and communicated, the "performative structure" of knowledge. The university, then, is a site that is traversed by "unavoidable conflict" because of the very nature of what it does. That said, Derrida argues that it is necessary to take a position, "in work itself, toward the politico-institutional structures that constitute and regulate our practice, our competences, and our performances", requiring "a new questioning about responsibility...". Given the inherently conflictual nature of the university, Derrida does not believe that such a position will emerge from some sort of consensus, but will rather come from what he terms "levers": "when one asks how to be oriented in history, morality or politics, the most serious discords and decisions have to do less often with ends, it seems to me, than with levers".²²

Approaches that embrace Derridean levers of change can perhaps be termed the "subversive Humanities", and could be matched by "subversive Science"; the challenges of evolutionary theory demonstrated through the allure of dinosaurs, green chemistry, the challenges of urban growth, the mysteries of HIV. They suggest that the curriculum will be changed incrementally, as knowledge is used to challenge the status quo within, between and across disciplinary fields.

If such levers are to have effect – to demonstrate traction beyond their immediate application, creating lasting change – they need to be enabled by an appropriate intellectual environment that seeks the exciting possibilities in thinking differently. Here, the key relationship is between the Humanities and the Sciences. To adapt Kant's metaphor to the contemporary university, we can perhaps think of "formative" and "professional" Faculties (rather than "lower" and "higher"). The Sciences and Humanities are the formative core of the university, the site where epistemology is moulded. The professional Faculties (Law, Commerce, Medicine, Engineering) are more directly related to the world. Such a model will cause instant outrage, as lawyers, medical researchers and economists assume that their intellectual work is being given second-class status, and sociologists, chemists and mathematicians protest for the recognition of the practical values of their disciplines. However, outrage is itself a lever for change, and may promote wider debate on this key set of issues.

The Sciences and the Humanities, then, need to come together around a series of key transformative issues. These need to include reflection on the nature of enquiry, the relationship between the different fields of knowledge, interdependencies and collaborations, the issue of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and the relationship between research, teaching and the application of knowledge to pressing social and economic issues.

²² Derrida, J. (1992). *Mochlos; or, The Conflict of the Faculties. Logomachia: the Conflict of the Faculties*. R. Rand. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press: 1-34.

A third area of work concerns the wider network. In this regard, it is useful to see the networks that link universities (or more accurately, perhaps, universities as clusters of specific points of connection) as assets in themselves, the “invisible colleges” that define academia. New technologies for communication offer huge possibilities for developing these networks while, as Geri Augusto warns us, never being without effect in their own forms of categorization and cultural influence. Of particular importance is the relationship with the diaspora. African universities are ambivalent about the diaspora. But the diaspora is also the front line of representation of Africa in the west and north, mediating perceptions and providing vital connections with the continent. There is be a significant opportunity in the explicit consideration of the role that the African diaspora can play in building stronger networks that sustain and advance the production of knowledge in, and of, Africa.

Disastrous Opportunities

Geri Augusto

This position paper will take up only one of the colloquium's injunctions to the present panel, that is, to react critically to Professor Calestous Juma's paper entitled 'We need to reinvent the African university'. I should probably disclose up front that at one point, we were both teaching in the same university, and that I made a modest contribution, in 2002, to the research and discussions informing one of the UN studies on biotechnology, development and innovation that Juma led. I am on record as believing that science and technology's indispensable role in research and innovation places it at the centre of what must be practiced in universities – but that no field of knowledge has *all* the answers. I want to take a different road, to come by the arguments to be raised very briefly here: that of my experience in Tanzania, a good 25 years ago, and some of what I call the 'storm lessons' of the past year, when I grappled with the assignment to conceive and coordinate Brown University's response to Hurricane Katrina. Both, I hope, will allow me to complicate a bit Juma's notion of reinventing higher education in Africa.

Three strategies are adumbrated in Juma's paper. On the face of it, one can hardly disagree with the notion that existing universities in Africa could benefit from reforms that enhance their relevance to the spaces and contexts where they are located. One can have nothing to say against upgrading the level of competence at Africa's tertiary institutions dedicated to technological training, while retaining the links that these are often more likely to have to some of the more concrete, immediate problems facing communities. And it seems entirely reasonable to take the opportunity of opening any new universities to rethink curriculum, teaching and where the buildings should even go up. The devil, I suggest, is not just in the details, but also in who gets to shape the framework and the categories, and how the links across knowledge terrains are conceived and pursued.

Let me take, by way of illustration, Professor Juma's suggestion that it is time to take higher education 'to the poor', and in association with this, that concept, pursued by universities in many places: 'outreach'. Among the many devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina last year on the US Gulf Coast was severe damage to several of the smaller, less well-resourced historically black universities which are also, almost by definition, situated in some of the poorest, overwhelmingly black communities of New Orleans and in coastal Mississippi. In many ways, Katrina laid bare some of the most pressing human and civil rights issues that the US faces – or hides from – in this new century. Direct relief and support to individuals, communities and educational institutions impacted by the disaster, of course, were the intended outcomes of Brown's Hurricane Katrina response, and these were provided. But for the institutions of higher education involved – and for Brown University, as it sought to support their recovery – Katrina did something else as well. It provided what we might call 'a disastrous opportunity' to think about how to link to the universities' intellectual and academic direction with teaching, research and practical approaches to those issues in public education, voting rights, housing, environmental justice, energy conservation, popular culture, public health, immigration and many other matters which the Storm brought up on its muddy waters.

Having to think about how to put a university back together again has forced an analysis – often reluctantly and with limited success, it must be admitted – of all the ‘moving parts’ needed to effect institutional recovery, as well about a different set of relations with the surrounding communities. This was one case where it was crystal clear that town and gown, neighbourhood and business, library and hospital, needed each other. But for some of us involved in these discussions, and in the uphill endeavour to rebuild and restart, this was not a matter of just ‘bringing in business’ or turning the specification of curriculum over to local industry. Instead – or perhaps I should say, alongside – debates have been kindled about exciting new lines of research which might reap enormous benefit from cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration. One example is with respect to that quintessential New Orleans cultural institution, Carnival (or as it may be more familiar to many, Mardi Gras). Professors at Dillard University have proposed that it be investigated more deeply as a *site of cultural resistance* – its imbrication with black working-class life in New Orleans; the roots of some of its symbols and vocabularies in the culture of the enslaved Kongolese as well as that of the Native Americans of the region; the links it shares with Caribbean, Brazilian and even Capetonian popular festivals which have created similar liminal cultural spaces; the role it has played in the always-contentious evolution of politicized black and white spaces in the city ... *and* its indispensable place in rebuilding a local economy in which tourism plays an important part. The point here is that community cultural and social institutions, popular young artists, and respected elders who are the guardians of the traditions of dance and music may have as much to contribute as academics, and that these in turn, in order to study the whole phenomenon with various ends in mind, will have to come from a range of disciplines. It may be a mistake to think of this kind of new direction, on the university side, as ‘outreach’. Rather, it might be something more like the public use of disciplinary knowledge in a complex, interactive way. And that, I hope, suggests something useful about how one deploys university students and Professors across the community, as an integral part of what they do, as well as how what are often regarded as mainly ‘sites of pathology’ may also be a locus for the collaborative creation of new knowledge.

Juma in his paper points to tourism, as well, when he suggests Tanzania (along with his native Kenya) as a place where new institutions of higher learning might profitably dedicate themselves to wildlife management. I never visited a game park while I lived there, in the mid-1970s. But I did imbibe that invigorating swirl of ideas and contentious debates about how to build freedom and educate for self-reliance that was Dar es Salaam, when all the southern African liberation movements were based and supported there; and when its university regularly sent students home, at holiday time, with the assignment of researching their own communities closely, and created around this work, as well as those of its Professors, institutes dedicated specifically to various aspects of the praxis of development. Who could live in Tanzania, at that time, and not appreciate the power of kiSwahili as the language of ordinary people, as the vehicle of cultures both ‘classic’ and popular, as the shared heritage of that coast of Africa whose urban history stretches back over centuries of exchange inland and overseas, as a medium for *ideas*? I want merely to suggest here that, in rethinking possible university contributions to the further development, or transformation, of tourism in Africa, one might go beyond preparing students for managing The Big Five.

Finally, I would like to suggest that there may be at least some irony in proposals for international institutional partnership which urge uncritically a larger role for any agency which bears heavy responsibility for those disastrous conditionalities which, after two decades, left so many of Africa's existing institutions of higher education 'SAPped'.

I will end with a reminder with which I believe Professor Juma would agree. Technological development only really takes root, and spreads its benefits, when it builds as well on local and indigenous knowledge, symbols, designs and ideas. That, I think, is true universally – and puts South Africa at tremendous potential advantage.

Epistemic Decolonization

Anthony Bogue

Brown University

We have been asked in part to react to Professor Juma's paper. I will give a very general reaction and then use a concrete case to illustrate what I think is critical to 'reinventing' the university in the aftermath of anti-colonial sovereignty. Unlike Professor Juma, I do not believe that the African university was just constructed to produce 'civil servants' for the newly independent states, but rather that while it sociologically carried out this function it did so within an epistemic context. Secondly while paying great attention to the 'development' challenges of African university, one has to be careful that in rethinking the curriculum of the university in Africa, we do not suggest that the university *only* performs a technical role for the emergence of a powerful private sector.

One, of course admits that African and indeed 'third world' universities must pay great attention to creating the conditions for innovative research for economic, health and product development. But certainly economic production in the modern world – labour markets if you will – do not demand simply technical solutions. What about the idea of critical learning? What about the idea of interdisciplinary work? And what about the idea that there may be African knowledges that are of importance not only for Africa but also for the world stock of knowledge. So when one speaks about 'harnessing the world's fund of knowledge for development', where is the knowledge of Africa and, in particular, whose knowledge of Africa? How does a university become an engine of community development if it does not understand the community from inside?

It would therefore seem to me that 'reinventing' the African university perhaps requires two challenges. One is a position of stance, of location What is the relationship of the university to the community in which it resides? And the second challenge which follows from the first is how does epistemic decolonization occur?

I cannot pretend to offer formal answers to any of these questions for South Africa, since there are always specific local issues which create nuance in both substance and style. What I may usefully do is to speak of an experience and of a project that I was engaged with at the University of the West Indies, Mona, in the department of political science where I taught for some years.

A project of peace and new political knowledge.

In 1998, the Jamaican post-colony was wracked by violence. Some of it was criminal violence a partial consequence of the drug trafficking; another element was 'domestic' violence; and another was the consequence of what has been called, wrongly I think, 'tribal political violence'. All these elements congealed into making urban politics and daily life violent in many communities. In the late 1990s I was given the task of teaching and redeveloping a graduate course in Caribbean Politics. This was some 30-odd years after political independence. The course had been regularly taught in the department since political independence and the formation of faculty of social sciences in the 1960s. However, the intriguing thing about the course was that it stopped at the anti-colonial

struggle. In other words, topics about, power, political culture and political leadership were all taught from the perspective of the formal political anti-colonial struggle. While this was an important and necessary foundation for the study of Caribbean politics it could not adequately explain the recurring feature of violence that had become a cause of great societal concern. The challenge that I faced was how to teach post-colonial Caribbean politics. This in turn led to two things:

- 1) The development of a curriculum of readings which would include some of the conventional readings but would also begin to shift thinking about politics not as simply institutional power/state formations but to politics that can be related to subjectivities.
- 2) The development of a class research project which forced an elite regional educational institution to engage with the community in which it resided. This project also meant doing interdisciplinary work, that is deploying some of the research methods of both sociological and anthropological investigation in making an effort to understand the 'internal reasons' for violence. We sought to understand how violence was perceived by the members of the community; how it was enacted and what were its meanings for those who were its witnesses and perpetrators. In the end, we wanted to know how violence reconfigured power both at the local and national levels and to have some answers to a large question in political philosophy – the relationship of violence to power: was violence *itself* power rather than a consequence of the exercise of power?

One result of this project was that over time it became a mechanism for a vigorous community attempt at peace. Indeed, for about two years peace reigned in the community and was only broken after a series of unfortunate political events.

This project was not one of social work since our primary objective was not to rehabilitate the young men involved in violence. We sought to gain knowledge about violence as a concrete major element of Jamaican social and political life. The research papers done by the students revealed conceptions of violence, of war and peace, of notions of justice that none of us any previous ideas about. It therefore struck me that one could not think of policy measures about community development and renewal without understanding what exactly those terms meant to the so-called 'poor'.

As someone whose formal disciplinary training was in political philosophy, I found that conceptions of justice from Rawls, or notions of procedural equality, melted away when members of the community elaborated what such values meant to them. Thus one result of this project was my own reformulation of many of the central conceptual values of political philosophy and my own rethinking of the very meaning of political philosophy and how it should be studied and taught. The project unearthed subjugated knowledge and in doing so not only performed scholarship but contributed to perhaps creating new epistemic grounds for thinking about the meaning of the political. From our research the political could now not only be thought of in terms of the conventional questions of political obligation – how we should be ruled. Rather the central question became 'how should we live together as human beings?' That is the question which colonial modernity has forced us to think about and we reflect for a moment on some of the problems which face us in the world then we would agree that this is indeed a central problem. What is

instructive therefore is how an engagement with a profound local problem could yield these insights.

Many of the 15 students in that Masters graduate class have gone on to PhD work, some in political philosophy, others in comparative politics and others in public policy. A few have become high-school teachers. I have read many of the dissertations of those that have gone on to do PhD work in the US and UK. From those that I have read, each of their supervisors comment on the new ways in which these students approach their work and how they have learnt new ways to think about the subject matter. One of these students is now in South Africa at the University of South Africa and examining questions of democracy and its meanings. So one lesson I think that may be gleaned from this is that our students are often very willing if we too make the necessary jump.

If I may be allowed a relapse to a disciplinary point here.

Part of epistemic decolonization requires not only interdisciplinary work but also confrontation within disciplines themselves. With that in mind I wonder why African philosophy and African political philosophy have not received curriculum recognition at UCT? Both these fields of study have been recognized by many of the best universities in the world. The premier academic association of American philosophy, The American Philosophical Association, recognizes these fields. Over the last two years there has been a regular conference of the Caribbean Philosophical Association, there are at least two major associations of African philosophers, and there are numerous journals about the field, many published by leading Western presses. I am currently involved with a project at Oxford University sponsored in part by the British Academy, which is focused on non-‘Western’ political philosophy. We should not wait for others to act on our behalf. It is in our own self-interest to carry out *epistemic decolonization* as one action in ‘reinventing the African University’.

The Ghanaian Experience

Elom Dovlo

University of Ghana

Professor Juma is right in arguing for the creation of a new generation of universities in Africa that address the development needs of the continent and focus on community problem solving.

In Ghana, the word ‘relevance’ dominates the discourse of the government, industry and the press in matters relating to the universities, which are often chastised as ‘Ivory Towers’ whose works do not transform society.

Some of the challenges that must be met to turn this vision into reality include:

- Relating academic knowledge to industry-required skills
- Developing relevant curriculum
- Offering quality education in the face of student population explosion.
- Relevant staff development and training
- Funding for universities
- Promoting the ideal to emergent new universities.

The presentation shares experience rather than offer a notated academic paper with references.

Academic knowledge and industry-required skills

Government and the captains of industry in Ghana complain that graduates from Ghanaian universities need to be retrained to fit into jobs they offer. They often urge universities to move from abstract knowledge and theories to a more skills and hands-on training that would meet development needs.

For university education to be relevant to development there is the need to create an interface between the universities and the public and private stakeholders. To create and sustain this, interface universities need to:

- 1) Take the initiative and market their relevance so that public and private institutions including industries can use their resources and expertise to achieve their set goals and objectives.
- 2) Create space to engage stakeholders through well-designed workshops and seminars and publications to disseminate research findings.
- 3) See the public and private sector as partners in research and project design, drawing on the practical experiences of the former.
- 4) Prioritize the policy implications of research findings for government and industry, etc.
- 5) Enhance interaction between students and these stakeholders through career counselling and on-the-job training experiences for students.
- 6) Restructure existing courses and introduce new courses.
- 7) Transform some present structure of faculties into colleges, where specific programmes can be run and administration will be decentralized for effective academic work to take place.

Curriculum development

The 'domestication' of knowledge, as Professor Juma argues, will make universities in Africa truly relevant to their context. This does not mean losing sight of universal values of inquiry but contributing African dimensions to it.

Curriculum changes should not be limited to the creation of industrial sciences training aimed at economic development alone. The humanities are relevant to the qualitative elements of development. They must create programs that research such needs and handle the attitudinal changes and vision creation that lead to a better society.

The humanities must seek to produce graduates for 'community service' rather than the 'civil service'. The goal of such curriculum should be to produce visionaries who transform societies, trainers who empower and enable others to transform society, and planners who execute the transformation.

These were some of the issues discussed at the 2006 Faculty of Arts Colloquium at the University of Ghana. The theme was 'The Humanities and the Job Market'. Each department led by the head made presentations focused on how their curriculum produces graduates who are relevant to national needs and the job market. This has led to the re-thinking of courses offered in the departments that constitute the faculty.

Increasing the student population and the quality of teachings and learning

Changes in content of curriculum, although necessary, are not alone sufficient to achieve the vision.

Technical and environmental issues relating to education need to be dealt with. An example is the student population explosion at Ghanaian universities that is adversely affecting the quality of teaching and learning.

Visions cannot be translated in a detached manner but with passion, yet the large numbers have reduced lecturer contact with students, making it difficult to identify and mentor brilliant students. Continuous assessment has partially broken down and final examinations in the form of objective and multiple-choice questions make it difficult to fully impart analytical skills. Overcrowded facilities and resultant student anonymity make many students engage in survival activities rather than learn.

Faculty members are over-stretched and engaged in a perennial cycle of teaching and grading of scripts. They hardly find time for research to develop courses based on a wider experience of their context and environment.

The result for both staff and students is the development of a survival mentality within the universities rather than mentality that aims at innovation, progress and success.

Staff development

There is the need for a reorientation of staff beyond the classroom to communities where our graduates serve. Staff resource learning centres and quality control units are in themselves not enough to achieve this need. They must be effectively set within the context of transforming the universities to be relevant beyond the lecture rooms.

First there is the need to attract young and visionary staff. In Ghana poor salaries have made it difficult to attract young lectures to replace an ageing population of lecturers. At the University of Ghana, Legon, 40% of the faculty are due to retire within the next five

years and many retired lecturers are presently serving on contract.

Further, about 50% of the academic staff in Ghanaian universities hold MPhil degrees. Apart from a lack of money to fund PhD studies abroad, there is the constant fear that those who study abroad become part of the brain drain. They also acquire paradigms of knowledge that are more relevant to the countries where they study.

It is therefore important to develop viable graduate programmes on the continent not only for the purpose of producing scholars for the universities but also to raise the calibre of manpower to meet the development needs of various nations and the continent. Presently, graduate students at the University of Ghana, for instance, form only about 10% of a total population of 27,000 students.

An increase in the percentage of graduate students must be an important strategy of Africa's universities. Apart from technical training are other various areas of expertise; the concept guiding graduate studies must be in line with the discussions taking place at this colloquium. There must also be mentoring to strengthen the younger faculty.

The area of graduate studies especially requires universities in Africa to network and develop partnerships in split and summer programmes that harness our expertise towards a postgraduate research base for the continent. The African diaspora can contribute their expertise to this enterprise.

Funding and fund-raising

I once saw a poster of a chimpanzee in jail covering his face which had the caption 'if you think education is expensive, try ignorance'. I believe that like the universities in Ghana, many state universities in Africa are just recovering from a coma of financial deprivation which swept most of the continent for almost three decades.

There is therefore a need for governments to develop policies on sustainable funding of education. Ghana's establishment of the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFUND) has been a booster to education in general and tertiary education in particular in recent years.

Universities especially those funded by the state however need to have sound financial management. Fund-raising beyond government subventions must be a very important aspect of university administration. Indeed fund-raising ability has become one of the requirements for appointment to deanship and other senior positions at the University of Ghana.

New Universities

Juma's thought provoking paper called for a new generation of African universities which will have a new quest for relevant knowledge. I believe the older universities also need to be recreated, transformed or, to use a religious term, 'born again'.

Professor Juma may add the University of Development Studies (UDS) – a public university in the Northern sector of Ghana – to the list of universities in his paper which are pursuing innovative community-based programmes.

However, since Ghana liberalized tertiary education in the 1990s, the new universities (founded mainly by religious bodies) focus mainly on Theology and Business Administration. A few pay lip service to IT-related courses!

Their predisposition to business administration also raises the question of producing managers for non-existent businesses. There are suggestions that rather than management, entrepreneurship should be an important part of their curriculum to enable the establishment of the businesses to be managed, etc.

The accreditation process also requires them to affiliate with the older universities. In so doing, many conform to the curriculum of the older universities, thus pouring new wine into an old wineskin.

It may also be noted that, so far, vocational, technical and service skills important for production and development are run mainly by polytechnics. Though considered to be tertiary institutions, they struggle for recognition and funding through alternate strikes of students and faculty. This has disrupted their continuous development and the growth that will build up their experience and prestige.

Conclusion

Scholars in universities in Africa will agree with Professor Juma that they need to make their institutions relevant to the needs of the continent. This realization must be sustained through definitive policies and sharing of experiences. Organisations such as the Association of African Universities (AAU) and CORDESRIA, among others, must continue to promote networking among the universities to enable them harness the intellectual resources of the continent towards national and continental development.

At its establishment, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, required the University of Ghana to make African Studies a prerequisite for the award of the Bachelor's degree. The aim was to contextualize knowledge at the university. He also established as part of the University's development process a 'Travel in Africa' grant for faculty to visit and work in other universities in Africa for periods of up to 3 month, to gain and share experiences. The University of Ghana has just restored the grant. Many young scholars are looking for avenues to use the grant but cannot connect to colleagues on the continent due to poor networking.

I hope universities in Africa will open up such opportunities and factor them into their planning strategies for networking that will lead to sustained levels of cooperation and development to fulfill the mandate to produce and disseminate knowledge and knowledgeable people with leadership skills to transform the continent.

The Idea of the African University

Dan Izevbaye

Bowen University, Nigeria

In this paper I intend to focus on two related problems that are tied up with the evolution of the African university in the context of the present irreversible globalization.

The present debate needs to take account of a widespread global consciousness expressed in various tastes and practices that are not indigenous to the continent. I assume that from the African point of view a global consciousness is best interpreted and domesticated through the experience of those who are the primary instruments (and victims) of the global process, that is, Africans in the diaspora. I also take into account that at present, the process – or practice – of globalization does not imply the free movement of people or of technology, only of ideas and of products. I will base the discussion of the problem on the premise that globalization is a controlled process with roots in the international imperialism that was politically dismantled not too long ago. It is evident that globalization is still in its first phase. Thus the inherent contradictions of the present process – revealed, for example, in the tightening of borders – shows the struggle for the soul of globalization, including different forms of knowledge and their products. This struggle for control has implications for the retrieval or production of African indigenous knowledges, and for their appropriation and application by African institutions.

The idea of an African university should begin with an account of its origins. African scholars and scholars of African descent regularly cite the 16th century university at Sankore in Timbuktu, Mali, as a reassuring historical proof of African cultural possibilities. But like the morale-boosting ancient monuments of Egypt and Zimbabwe and the pre-colonial African empires, Sankore belongs to history and has no continuity with contemporary universities in Africa. The realism of the present must replace the romance of the past; while Sankore remains philosophically relevant, the idea of an African university must begin by considering the colonial origins of today's higher institutions.

With the exception of South Africa, the first universities in the British colonies were conceived as local extensions of British universities, producing a Western-educated middle class for the public service. This ideal was reflected in the design of the working and living space of universities established in colonial times, as well as the lifestyle that teachers and students adopted for themselves. This beginning explains existing structures and traditions. Modifications or radical innovations have been introduced in new institutions and, or by, new personnel. (However, even before the founding of post-Independence universities, fundamental changes in content and structure were already taking place, beginning with the initial adaptations of the curriculum to local conditions.) The 'idea' of the African university has take into account the environment in which African universities function at the present time – that is, the specific historical and cultural circumstances of the countries in which they are located and which they are meant to serve.

A case study may throw some light on some more general problems. In Nigeria, for

example, two complementary models emerged at Independence. At Ibadan, the academic structure of the former University College with its special relationship with the University of London remained, but African content became increasingly dominant. One slight anomaly in this development was the survival of the Institute of African Studies as a separate unit. In spite of the significant work being done at the Institute, it could be argued that in an African university the function of such an institute is largely reflexive, since it is realistic to expect most teaching and research in an African university to be African in content and purpose.

A possible solution to this minor structural incongruity came with the American course-system model that was adopted by Ibadan in the 1970s, eight years after it was introduced to Nigeria with the founding of the University of Nigeria at Nsukka in 1962. The flexibility of the American system not only allowed candidates to combine various subjects into different specializations within the same programme, it also facilitated the shifting of the older European curriculum content to the margins, while the African content moved to the centre. The apparent slow pace of change was strategic; it helped to buy time for developing African knowledges into much needed teaching materials.

One of the key influences on the modification of curriculum content and programmes in Nigerian universities is the pragmatism of admission candidates and their sponsors. The perceptions and expectations of such candidates differ markedly from the aspirations of the earlier generation of graduates, whose goal was to join the privileged middle class of civil servants and allied professionals, or return to teach in their villages. Although vestiges of that aspiration remain, traditional community support for candidates for university education has been displaced by personal motives, bringing a new individualism into play. Candidates are under greater family pressure to do 'something useful' in a society where jobs, but not the opportunities, have become greatly varied and materially rewarding.

University products now exceed the capacity of the employment market by far. In an attempt at encouraging self-reliance universities are required to prescribe at least one course in entrepreneurship for all undergraduates. One consequence is the marginalization of traditionally important disciplines (like Classics, History and even Geography). These are sometimes renamed or repackaged because of competition from more highly-rated allied programmes like Diplomatic Studies, International Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies and Urban and Regional Planning. At a higher level, the establishment of a class of specialized universities offering degrees in Agriculture, Technology and, more recently, Education, has changed the face of Nigerian tertiary education.

The other key consumer demand arose in response to the dwindling ratios of university slots. In view of the pressure on university places, the National Universities Commission began a continuing process of licensing private universities and considerably increased the number of universities to nearly eighty at the last count. We may here consider two important implications of this development for the identity of a new generation of Nigerians, which may also have implications for other parts of Africa. The first issue arises from the high fees that are charged by private institutions, justified by their lack of access to public funds. Even among the middle class, only the affluent can afford such fees, which can be up to six times the fees charged in Federal Government institutions.

The second issue is intertwined with the first. Many of the students in private universities, who were educated in private secondary schools, have imbibed the Westernized, elitist ethos of such schools, which are invariably tagged 'International School[s]'. A significant proportion of students in private universities usually have universities in Europe and America down as their first choice. Foreign embassies are regularly besieged by candidates for overseas education. There is an implied correlation here between the current brain drain problem and the role and status of the West in the present practice and values of globalization. An African University would have to address the problem of how, in a global world, identity and loyalty can translate into service to the community without breaching the human rights of individuals.

Africa in Global Systems of Knowledge

Bella Mukonyora

Western Kentucky University

In the Middle Ages, when universities first became a phenomenon, theology was the subject presumed to contain all the elements of knowledge one needed to live successfully in the world. Then, theology was no mere talk about the nature of God up above, but the dominant 'science' in local knowledge systems used to serve societies in Europe with universalistic ideas about the Christian God, man and the nature of the universe. Seen through the eyes of Plato and Aristotle, the world seemed ordered scientifically according to the rules of nature that theologians loved to be able to talk about. Apparently, Thomas Aquinas sometimes took his students to the city square where he taught in public. Why? It was important for him and his students to be able to appreciate the purpose of spending time in university as a way of coming to terms with ideas that served the interests of local communities.

In the secular world we live it today, the sacred canopy with which these old scholars worked has been removed. Learning about the world now takes the form of different disciplines, many of which clash horribly with theology. Some disciplines rely on such different approaches to knowledge that it is difficult to relate ideas from one subject with another. To make life even more complicated, the situations in which to translate knowledge systems are multiplied in the plural societies that now characterize most places in the world today.

The first lesson from the world in which universities were founded in Europe is that, to the great thinkers of the Middle-Ages like Thomas Aquinas, life in university was an opportunity 'widening the horizons' through countering ignorance about what was then seen as 'ideal way' to live in the world. It was hoped that one developed an accurate understanding albeit through what we now think is an outdated explanations of how things functions in nature. The second lesson is that the knowledge systems learned by being at university were directly related to the expectations of individuals when they returned to the wider society as it future leaders.

True, the last things anyone is looking for in the model of the original university described above are the outdated ways of viewing the world. Universities in the West have also long lost an interest in what I have described above. It is the case, nonetheless, that successful universities are those that take seriously the needs of the local communities they serve as part of building bridges between the local and the global. It would be a sign of bad faith on the part of the academics concerned with the university in Africa not to see that their role is like that of other progressive universities. i.e. that of a) building the confidence of its students; b) promoting in them an understanding of the social reality of South Africa, the rest of the continent, and, c) I would add, learning what goes on in Europe and America from which the global economy continues to be controlled. In short, there is scope for the advancement of as many knowledge systems as it takes to support the growth of a society of people who can make intelligent choices,

promote justice and peace in the modern world. More importantly in order to successfully curb problems of poverty, disease, droughts and other misfortunes, relationships based knowledge need to be forged with other countries in Africa and beyond. Those of us who teach the humanities need to understand enough of importance of sciences and the methods it relies one to work side by side in the event of calls for dialogue across disciplines.

In short, my vision of the university in Africa is one that focuses on making sure students understand fully the different knowledge systems that explain what is going on in the wider society. The European languages used in classrooms to translate what 'indigenous knowledge systems' make it necessary to complete the process of learning with lessons about the worldview that the English language describes globally. In order for Africa to have in its societies intelligent students who are capable of making politically correct choices, those who teach them have to know to know how to balance different kinds of knowledge, and, make sure students have skills by which to support the economic growth in South Africa.

In an age of information technology we know that there are different worldviews and cultures. The dominant ones engineered from outside to promote the interests of outsiders are just as crucial to grasp as those that are local. In other words, I am writing this position paper because there is scope for learning all about capitalist industries, right wing theological ideas, science, technology, the seductive way the Internet invades local and international law, etc. It is owed to students and the public not to have pockets of knowledge closed to them just because certain kinds of 'indigenous knowledge' now come first. As I am sure the African diaspora students will understand, grasping what went into slavery creates a student culture more able to pass critical judgments against the practice thereof, than a study of the African Diaspora where half the story is told to encourage a false sense of confidence. In South Africa, Apartheid and the way it was supported by a theology and a science devoted to armament is reprehensible to the new generation of scholars and students. Yet, it is an 'indigenous knowledge system' for students to learn about so as to grasp the reasons for introducing alternative knowledge systems. In other words, the best way to peace-built, promote justice and liberate, includes a good grasp of that which is being reacted against in post-colonial South Africa.

Global trends in university learning: In the three American universities I have had good fortune to pass by, starting with the University of Virginia, Duke University, Princeton, and where I now work, the University of Western Kentucky, there is now a greater openness to other cultural perspectives in different subject areas than ever before. This is because in post-colonial times, it makes more sense to recognize the plurality of cultural contexts and worldviews than to limit students to Western hegemonic models of knowledge. This means universities abroad are already learning to promote indigenous knowledge systems of a Western hegemonic variety alongside other knowledge system that explain why some of us have this opportunity of visit the University of Cape Town. I am being encouraged by Western Kentucky University to develop a global studies project in religious studies, for example. After this visit, I would readily consider bringing international students on a global religious studies project to Cape Town, provided the appropriate department here welcomes them. Just as universities located in the west are increasingly including in their educational systems, projects by which to widen the

horizons of students beyond Western cultures, a university located in Africa for Africa should wake up to the need to take seriously its own indigenous knowledge systems along side those others that explain the marginality of Africa in a global society. This way indigenous knowledge systems should be used to complete in students and understanding of the world they live in, not divide people and limit the horizons of students so that they are not able to benefit from advanced education abroad.

What does a university mean in Africa?

Alinah K Segobye

University of Botswana

Ideal: Place of learning and enlightenment, final point of entry for young Africans before a major career path to deliver wealth to self and families.

Reality: The young African faces barriers in access, learning experience and often uncertainties as to whether a job will be foreseeable at the end of the learning process.

Position: The African university can no longer afford to be perceived as a place of higher learning and ideas ivory tower divorced from the needs of the African citizenry. The young African entrant to higher education should receive an education that not only develops the ideal scholar but also prepares him or her as a citizen able to apply knowledge within a broad range of development contexts including creating the platform for self-employment.

The African university in the 21st century should respond to the major development challenges facing the continent today. The twin epidemics of poverty and public health challenges (TB, malaria and HIV/AIDS) challenge the African university to situate its research agendas around applied research to innovate technologies for empowering communities to mitigate extreme poverty and improved quality of life particularly health. Across the continent, research and researchers have begun to respond to the challenges faced by communities including the delivery of basic education through distance and open education means. The harnessing of ICT to develop indigenous knowledge resources (IKS) is one such area where a partnership between the African university and African societies is noted. The challenge of resources remains, particularly human resources and finance to scale up local innovations to global solutions.

Is the African university at the cusp of new global knowledge and research?

Ideal: Africa is the ultimate untapped laboratory. Its people and diverse environments are an as yet to be harnessed resource for revitalizing global knowledge and science.

Reality: The African university in the 21st century has a wealth of information and human resources but is faced with inadequate resources to harness these to bring about the transformation which could unlock this wealth of knowledge.

Position: The African university has the resources (human) that can deliver on Africa being at the centre of innovative research and dynamic growth in intellectual resources. However, the current mismatch between resources distribution (financial, infrastructure, and human) needs to be revisited with a view to prioritize intellectual development in Africa. The 1st and 2nd conferences of Intellectuals of Africa and the diaspora (CIAD I & CIAD II) recognized the importance of African leaderships shifting their paradigms to place the African intellectual at the centre of the development agenda with consummate resources and strategic engagement of the Africans in the diaspora.

Africa is unique in that it is a continent with some of the oldest innovations in science and technology (literacy – for example, Egyptian and Nubian civilizations) and one of the last

to realize an uptake in literacy for its citizenry. That said, Africa's illiterate millions are an opportunity for the African university to deliver knowledge resources and to foster new innovations in the learning environment in order to ensure that people are able to transform their livelihoods through indigenous knowledge. As an example, distance education for indigenous peoples in Africa including the provision of technologies has enabled communities to innovate in arts education, biotechnology and heritage conservation for communities such as the San in southern Africa. Equally, the delivery of HIV/AIDS education and treatment education has been enriched by tapping into local knowledge resources and use of non-conventional means of education in rural settings. Arguably, heritage education in Africa has the potential to unleash a wealth of knowledge hitherto suppressed and excluded by colonial experiences. Post-colonial Africa needs to reclaim the past and reaffirm Africa's position as the continent of creative knowledge and experience for the 21st century. The African university should be poised to play an expanding role in world heritage and development studies. The opportunity to demonstrate how world heritage can be developed in a sustainable way is one of the key observations of the WSSD and major conventions (for example UNESCO conventions on world heritage and the Rio Convention on Biodiversity) recognize the real wealth of Africa in resources diversity which can offer the rest of the world learning experiences on heritage management and sustainable development.

Does the African university have the capacity to transform itself?

Ideal: Yes, all the resources are there, including human resources, material and political support.

Reality: Many African universities function in conditions of adversity with limitations in human and other resources and constraints on academic freedom and governance. Leadership and political will are often lacking to drive intellectual development in the university.

Position: The African intellectual has not exhausted the means to test the extent of an enabling environment in their university. Ironically, the African state and university are among the few that provide a free or subsidized tertiary education, including job security for the academic. The challenges of SAP (Structural Adjustment Programmes) and other programmes which negatively impacted on institutional ability to deliver on a free education are noted. The African intellectual is still viewed as a pillar of society with immense esteem and community affirmation. This creates room for partnerships (for example public-private partnerships) which should have the private and public sectors as stakeholders and not adversaries in academic development. The current suspicions between governments (public sectors) and academic institutions may also be due to the failure by intellectuals to communicate their research agendas to the stakeholders and communities within which they are located. Transformation in university communications and research departments should prioritize people and public focused communications to ensure that the public is a meaningful stakeholder in tertiary education and development of ideas. The transformation of the African university is therefore a challenge not only to the academic and management but to the citizenry and policy makers who are stakeholders in the African university. With respect to global stakeholders, the dependency on global funding resources means that the African university will

necessarily have to communicate actively with international partners. From donor and grant-making bodies to universities involved in staff and student exchanges, the African university has the responsibility to be a key conduit for information exchange on the African landscape to its global partners. This can only add value to partnerships and enhance governance. By looking internally and externally and reprioritizing, the African university will revitalize itself anchoring its vision, mission and values in the African community and producing intellectuals relevant to its contexts.

What future directions for the African university?

Taking from the experience of the two recent conferences for intellectuals of Africa and the diaspora (CIAD I & II) several key points emerge as competitive advantages for Africa:

- 1) Africa has untapped human and knowledge resources to drive innovation in research and to deliver on development for its citizenry.
- 2) The African university faces constraints in access to resources (for example finance) and a continental commitment to redistribution of resources to develop the academy and science for development can be attained if priorities are reset (for example funds from mineral and energy wealth of Africa far exceeds reinvestment into citizen development)
- 3) Africa can be at the core of driving South-South partnerships and reduce the burden of buying new technologies from the North. Science development is costly and such costs (for example developing treatment HIV/AIDS) can benefit from partnerships with like states in the South. This should also be anchored on harnessing development and protection of IKS.
- 4) Developing research agendas focused on core advantages by African universities can vastly reduce the cost of human resource development in Africa and this should be anchored on a shared vision of a united and developed-centered Africa as opposed to pursuing fragmented development agendas.
- 5) Harnessing technology to situate the university outside the classroom is critical for the African university to reach the people. The need for a paradigm shift in pedagogy and delivery is critical if the university is to step down from the ivory tower and go to the community. For example, in heritage education, relocating from the 'National Museum' in the city to the archaeological site in the rural landscape creates win-win situations where archaeologists can work with the people, in the right landscape contexts, drawing on local knowledge and ensuring the hands-on application of knowledge.

Universities and their Communities

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University of Cheika Anta Diop, Dakar

Like any other university around the world, an African university is a key institution for the production, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge for advancement and betterment of humanity. Universities are also part of a global and local environment with which they interact and respond in multiple ways. Research and development programmes, curriculum orientation and public services, etc. should, in principle, be shaped accordingly to these local and global demands. As pointed out by Professor Calestous Juma, there is need and even urgency to create ‘a new generation of universities that focus on solving community problems’.

This statement implicitly implies the failure of African universities in general. Over the past few decades, student enrolment has grown considerably while the job market has been declining, which has led to a profound crisis in the higher education system. This crisis is only one of many that are striking Africa today. The name of our continent seems to correspond with poverty, contagious disease, drought and hunger, war and social upheavals. Indeed, Africa appears helpless, and one may wonder what universities in the continent have been doing or are doing to uplift it?

Historically, African universities were often conceived and operated to supply civil servants for the state. To many Africans, the university appeared to produce a Westernized elite that was solely concerned with its own advancement and incorporation into European ways and was too often at the service of a state generally concerned with national construction and the reproduction of a social hierarchy similar to colonialism.

It is timely and urgent that African universities break with these received stereotypes by considering and grappling with the problems and needs of the people in the communities where they are located. According to Juma, ‘fundamental reforms will be needed in curriculum design, teaching, location, choice of students and the management of the continent’s universities’. He then lists a number of successful innovations from which African universities can learn.

Indeed, curricular adaptation toward the specificities of the job market and the problems and needs of the community where the university is located is crucial. This, when supported by government policy, should lead to meaningful change. It is likely that students’ choices for enrolment will follow labour market requirements, which will force departments and faculties to be more competitive.

However, I am surprised that Juma considers curriculum change alone as the cure-all. Implementing the cure is no simple affair. How are we to design new curriculum in a context where research is stagnant and the teaching load is overwhelming? Research is too often carried out on an individual basis, and the evaluation of research and teaching is particularly poor. Additionally, research infrastructures are often obsolete, inadequate, or simply inexistent. How are we to deal with the extremely high number of student

enrolments and renewing our aging faculty? How are we to stop the brain drain? How are we to re-deploy or absorb the already educated but unemployed population in new sectors of the economy?

Many African countries have spent billions educating a mass of students that have ended up abroad or among the mass unemployed. Under these conditions, higher education seems an investment loss for many African countries. This has led me to believe that a much broader and profound reform than that of the curriculum alone is needed.

Although Juma indicated that 'the task ahead is not simply one of raising more funds', it is more likely that it is one of the most crucial. It is mainly because of the constraints mentioned above that many of our universities are lagging behind. Any curriculum change, even to a focus on community issues, will require prior quality research, publications, a lighter teaching load, decent earnings and revalorization of the higher education system. For curriculum change to have any significant impact, it must be accompanied with adequate research infrastructures, including laboratories, equipment, libraries, an effective system to store, retrieve and exploit information database, a system to encourage, evaluate and reward high calibre research, etc.

I agree with Juma that curricula oriented toward solving community problems could be an appropriate response to some of the problems African universities are facing. We should not, however, underestimate the hegemony of the Western-led 'knowledge society' and its incredible pressure on global values, products, and services. While there is a positive aspect to this, including a better quality of life (hygiene, nutrition, environmental protection, governance systems, productivity increase, etc.), it is also clear that it embodies Western political, economic, and institutional hegemonies that may constitute a threat to local knowledge and cultural values.

To be globally competitive, community problem solving curriculum will have to borrow technical and managerial skills from its own indigenous knowledge base. Over the past centuries, African societies have accumulated considerable knowledge on how to acquire, adapt, take advantage and reduce the risks posed by the spread of external knowledge society. Therefore, community problem solving curriculum must be accompanied by a grassroots public outreach where researchers and community members mutually listen to one another.

It is crucial that the community entrusts local scholars with their problems. This is important because as pointed out above, African universities have long been associated with Western values and a Western knowledge base. There was then a certain suspicion of the West and even of local scholars, who were too often viewed as Western emissaries. Yet it is only through interaction between scholars and the community in which they reside that community needs can be better defined, the appropriate policy choices be made and the right kind of external expertise selected.

Unfortunately, the sources of funding in African universities are too often externally generated. As a result, funders define the priorities and fix the goals and the means to achieve them. There lies Africa's eternal problem: funding. It is perhaps time to prioritize the use of our meager resources by defining strategic sectors crucial for economic and social development. The university can be one of those sectors.

Recently the Bank for African Development (BAD) pledged to fund what is known as the 'reform LMD' *License* (Bachelor), *Maîtrise* (Master), *Doctorat* (Doctorate) in francophone West Africa. The reform aims mainly at harmonizing the degrees offered with those of English-speaking countries in order to facilitate student and academic staff mobility.

The sad thing about universities in Africa is that scholars in Africa are generally more informed about research, technical and theoretical innovations, and publications taking place in Europe and North America than they are of their immediate, African neighbours. Perhaps a the key to solving some of the many problems our universities face is to develop student and faculty exchanges and study and teaching abroad to share expertise and experience. This will foster the development and circulation of local knowledge and know-how within Africa while minimizing the risks to our own cultural values.

The University in Africa: Agendas for Change

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The fundamental argument of Professor Juma's thought paper is perfectly valid. African universities must reinvent themselves in order to contribute in new ways to economic regeneration and development of their communities in a world of ever-widening and unequal global interactions.

African universities have always been seen as central to national development. It is the nature and implications of this function that must be re-thought in the context of Africa's present condition and the imperatives of a new global order. In a global economic environment in which national economies must be internationally competitive to operate in a world economy there is a new and heightened demand for specific forms of knowledge, information and expertise. This situation presents a major challenge to the common idea of an African university as a national institution funded entirely by the state and committed to teaching, research and the production of trained personnel. How can African universities re-orient their curricula, institutional practices and goals to benefit from the new global economy and at the same time maintain their local focus and particular identities?

Juma's call for a development-oriented focus that would make universities active agents in social and community development is a radical new direction. I share his perspective, though not completely. I agree that curricula and research in African universities can be meaningfully applied to solve specific needs and problems in communities and universities must be at the forefront of such implementations. If we build this kind of relevance into the learning outcomes of our course designs, our curricula would be challenged in ways that would push our teaching and research into innovative directions. However, we must not think that development only entails economic growth and technological knowledge, nor must we delude ourselves that external partnerships, private sector collaboration and integration into the global economy would inevitably and automatically reverse our economic decline. Our economic problems are also in part, specific to our continent and we should develop an African angle on development that would push the concept beyond its purely economic, capitalist and first world connotations.

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa have inherited historical handicaps that have been compounded by bad governance, autocratic rule, civil wars, poor gender awareness, HIV/AIDS and a massive exodus of skilled and talented Africans into first-world institutions. Addressing these realities would be crucial to our ability to participate meaningfully in a global political economy. How can universities in Africa re-orient their curricula, teaching, institutional systems and goals to tackle and resolve these realities? I want to share my thoughts on these questions by exploring the following specific but inter-related areas:

The diversification of university curricula

This is crucial. We must not let the logic of visible technological transformations determine our course offerings. How we see ourselves – our history, our accumulated

thinking and our new post-colonial aspirations – as Africans should be part of our new positioning in the global economy. The value of the humanities cannot always be measured in terms of visible transformations in communities. But the habits of critical thought they inculcate, their critical engagement with values, and their nurturing of all forms of creativity must be seen as part of national development. It is, after all, the quality of critical and creative thinking we bring to economic transformation that will ensure our success both in our communities and the global world. What I am driving at is that the old traditional idea of the university as a place of reflection and personal development must not be displaced by the logic of economic transformation.

Experimentation with varied modes of teaching

To meet the heightened requirement for new knowledge, universities in Africa must be willing to move beyond inherited schedules and methodologies to experiment with different kinds and modes of teaching and learning. We must re-invent lectures and tutorials as part of our present necessity. It is not every lecture that requires personal teacher-student contact. Technology-intensive operations like radio, TV and Internet communications can reduce formal lectures and free lecturers for other teaching and research. Some universities are already experimenting with vacation courses, evening courses, distance learning and virtual universities. Where universities lack specific expertise they should be prepared to change their hiring systems and employ faculty on a short-term basis for specific vacation courses. It may be tempting to leave these experimentations as amorphous asides to regular university teaching, but they should be fully integrated into the overall pedagogy and monitored through student and staff evaluations, quality assessments and comparisons with other university courses and methods.

Different kinds of universities

It is important to recognize that not all universities can be high-powered research-oriented universities with full-blown graduate and research facilities. It is better to have a university that works powerfully in providing undergraduate education than to have a wholesale production of badly organized and supervised PhD programmes. African universities must be willing to designate specific universities for undergraduates and ensure that this provision meets the highest standards of undergraduate study. Such designations may leave funds and energies for high-powered research universities that invest in excellent research and Africa-centered knowledge production. Excellent research centres on the ground in Africa will attract researchers to the continent. African researchers would stop being mere data collectors for external researchers in projects over which they would have no ultimate impact.

External links with diaspora scholars

This is a major but untapped area of resource which African universities neglect at a cost. Diaspora scholars have after all worked painstakingly to shift discourses on Africa in the various disciplines of knowledge. Universities should tap their resources and invite their collaboration instead of seeing them negatively as unpatriotic deserters. With their particular knowledge of external sources, such scholars can help with grant-writing schemes for international funding and share their expertise in various new ways. I suggest that African universities compile a database of African scholars abroad and seek active

research and teaching collaboration with them. This is one way of returning the discourse on Africa to the continent, as was the practice in the 1960s.

Funding, fund-raising and income-generation for universities

Though I have left this item last, it is crucial to all the issues I have raised. While African universities should hold on to the idea of the university as a national and publicly funded institution they should also re-invent the notion of a national university. The old system in which universities were funded entirely by governments and therefore totally controlled by presidents and military leaders would be transformed if universities found independent sources of funding. African universities need not be afraid of creating purely administrative posts for this extra academic activity. Such a department must be overseen by high-powered officers of the university and be charged with exploring all avenues of raising money as well as suitable systems of accounting and disbursement. These should vary from raising research grants to finding international donors and targeting alumni through regular newsletters. Such a department should also be charged with generating income from university infrastructure: rooms, conference halls, catering services, international conferences, etc.

These thoughts may appear to be idealistic luxuries in these times of economic hardship. But they are ideas for the present and the future that should at least be raised and debated.

A Historical Accounting of African Universities: Beyond Afropessimism

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Discourses about Africa continue to be infected by what we used to call in the 1980s and 1990s Afropessimism, the belief that Africa is irredeemably doomed to backwardness and chaos. Afropessimism embodies two tendencies – vilification of African experiences and valorization of Euro-American engagements with Africa, that Africa is incapable by itself of historical progress and that any progress evident there is the result of Euro-American interventions. Discourses of African higher education have not escaped this narrative. There are two widespread assumptions about university education in Africa: first that the Europeans introduced it, and second that it has declined since independence. Both are false. Higher education including universities long antedated the establishment of “western” style universities in the nineteenth century and the post-independence era was a period of unprecedented growth during which the bulk of contemporary Africa’s universities were established.

As a historian profoundly committed to Africa’s development and social transformation, I believe history – a long historical perspective – is a powerful antidote to the fatalism often induced by the overwhelming flow of current events that Afropessimism turns into eternal trends. In this case, as an intellectual historian interested both in the history of ideas and of knowledge producing institutions, and one who is engaged in African and global debates about the future of higher education, the need for a proper understanding of Africa’s long and complicated history of tertiary education is imperative. I offer here brief reflections on the history and contemporary challenges of African universities.

The origins of higher education in Africa including universities as communities of scholars and learning can be traced to three institutional traditions: first, the Alexandria Museum and Library, second, the early Christian monasteries, and third, the Islamic mosque universities.

The Alexandria Museum and Library was established in the third century B.C. in Egypt. It grew to become the largest center of learning in the ancient world. The complex is estimated to have housed more than 200,000 volumes, and supported up to 5,000 scholars and students. Clearly, this was a large research institution, and many of the leading Egyptian and other African as well as Greek, Roman, and Jewish scholars of the ancient world studied or worked there at some point in their lives. The library gradually declined as buildings were destroyed by fire, its holdings looted in times of warfare, and scholars left due to political instability in the twilight years of the Roman empire. Alexandria left a rich legacy of scholarship covering a wide range of fields from mathematics and the sciences to philosophy and religion.

It was also in Egypt, one of the earliest centers of Christianity in the world, that monasteries first developed in the third century A.D. Tens of thousands of Christians gathered in the monasteries in the desert not only to escape the exactions of Roman rule, but also for a life devoted to spiritual contemplation. The monasteries and the

monastic orders that regulated them provided important spaces for reflection, writing, and learning. The idea and institution of monasteries spread to other parts of Africa, and elsewhere in the world as far as Britain and Georgia in Europe and Persia and India in Asia, out of which some universities later developed.

One country where monastic education developed early was Ethiopia where Christianity was introduced in the fourth century A.D. and became the state religion. From the period of the Zagwe dynasty in the twelfth century this system included higher education, which was largely restricted to the clergy and nobility. At the bottom of the system was the Qine Bet (School of Hymns), followed by the Zema Bet (School of Poetry, and at the pinnacle was an institution called Metsahift Bet (School of the Holy Books) that provided a broader and more specialized education in religious studies, philosophy, history, and the computation of time and calendar, among various subjects.

It is the third tradition, Islam, which gave Africa its first higher education institutions that have endured to the present. Indeed, Africa claims distinction as the center of the world's oldest Islamic universities and some of the world's oldest surviving universities. They include Ez-Zitouna madrasa in Tunis founded in 732. Next came al-Qarawiyyin mosque university established in Fez in 859 by a young migrant female princess from Qairawan (Tunisia), Fatima Al-Fihri. The university attracted students and scholars from Andalusian Spain to West Africa. Then in 969 Al-Azhar mosque university was established in Cairo, the same year that the city was founded by the Fatimid dynasty from the Maghreb. It came to be regarded as the most prestigious center of Islamic education and scholarship and attracted the greatest intellectuals of the Muslim world, including Ibn Khaldun, the renowned historian who taught there. Another major early Islamic university was Sankore mosque university in Timbuktu founded in the twelfth century where a wide range of courses were taught from theology, logic, astronomy and astrology, to grammar, rhetoric, history and geography.

The legacy of the ancient Islamic university for modern Africa is three-fold. First, many of the Islamic universities have survived to the present, although they have undergone major changes over the centuries, including the introduction of more secular, technical and professional fields of study. This is true of three of the four universities mentioned above – Sankore being the sole exception. Second, in recent times new Islamic universities have been created in several countries across the continent often patterned on the old Islamic universities as part of the wave of privatization of higher education as state control has loosened. Third, the “western” university introduced in Africa from the nineteenth century bore Islamic influences. Europeans inherited from the Muslims a huge corpus of knowledge, rationalism and the investigative approach to knowledge, an elaborate disciplinary architecture of knowledge, the notions of individual scholarship, and the idea of the college, all of which became central features of the European university exported to the rest of the world with the rise of European imperialism.

Missionaries – both European and African including those from the diaspora – initially undertook the introduction of Africa's “western” style universities. The

process was largely concentrated in the expanding European settler colonies of South Africa and Algeria, and in Sierra Leone and Liberia newly established colonies for African diaspora resettlement. The first was Fourah Bay College founded in Sierra Leone in 1826 and more than three decades later, in 1862, came Liberia College. The two institutions became the beacons of West Africa's burgeoning colonial intelligentsia and nationalism. Edward Blyden, the renowned Pan-Africanist scholar-activist, was actively engaged with both colleges. In addition, there were a series of smaller colleges in Liberia.

In the meantime, in South Africa segregated institutions were set up beginning in 1829 with the South African College in Cape Town (later the University of Cape Town), which mostly catered to the English settlers. In 1866 a college for the Afrikaner settlers was created called the Stellenbosch Gymnasium, which finally became Stellenbosch University in 1918. A small college for Africans, the Lovedale Institution, was created in 1841, which was increasingly modeled on African American industrial and vocational colleges in the United States. Then in 1873 the University of the Cape of Good Hope (renamed the University of South Africa in 1916) was established initially as an examining body before it became one of Africa's and the world's leading distance education providers.

As in South Africa, in French Algeria higher education was largely confined to the settler population. It began with the establishment of the School of Medicine in 1857, followed in 1879 by the creation of four specialized schools of medicine, pharmacy, sciences, letters, and law, which merged to form faculties of the University of Algiers in 1909. Another French colony where higher education started in the late nineteenth century was Madagascar where the Antananarivo Medical Training Academy was established in 1896.

It was not until the twentieth century following the European conquest that colonial universities spread to the rest of the continent. Two countries escaped colonization, Liberia and Ethiopia, but both sought to modernize their educational systems. In Liberia, where American models were popular, Cuttington University College was created in 1949 with support from the Protestant Episcopal Church, and Liberia College destroyed by fire in the late 1940s was reconstituted into the University of Liberia in 1951. The brief Italian occupation of Ethiopia 1935-41 shocked Ethiopia into embarking on a drive for educational modernization. In 1949, the government created Trinity College, which was granted a charter in 1950 under the name of University College of Addis Ababa, and renamed Haile Selassie University in 1961.

In colonial Africa, the development of higher education remained limited until after the Second World War because the colonial authorities were generally suspicious of and opposed to the modern educated African elite and their nationalist demands for equality and freedom, and colonial civil servants feared African competition. Africans seeking higher education were often forced to go abroad including the imperial metropolises themselves. During this period higher education was limited to the British and French empires, virtually none was provided in Belgian and Portuguese Africa.

The first colonial university college in Northern Africa was the Gordon Memorial College founded in the Sudan in 1902, renamed Khartoum University College in 1951

and Khartoum University at independence in 1956. A decade later, in 1912, the Islamic Institute was founded; it became a college in 1924 and was renamed the Omdurman Islamic University in 1965. In Egypt, Cairo University was founded in 1908 despite the vehement opposition of the colonial governor. It grew to become one of the largest universities in Africa, with a student population presently of 155,000 students and more than 5,500 faculty members and instructors. In 1938 the university formed a branch in Alexandria, which later became Alexandria University in 1942. In South Africa, a new era in higher education began with the establishment of the Inter-State Native College in 1916, later renamed the University College of Fort Hare in 1951. Fort Hare became a magnet for not only black South African students but also for African students from across Southern Africa as attested by its list of alumni who include such nationalist leaders as Nelson Mandela, Seretse Khama, and Robert Mugabe.

Elsewhere, before the war a few institutions were created that functioned largely as secondary schools or technical schools before they were converted after the war into university colleges. Examples from the British colonies include Makerere Government College established in Uganda in 1921 first as a vocational school before it was turned into Makerere University College in 1949. In Nigeria Yaba Higher College was set up in 1932, which served for years as the country's major higher education institution. In Ghana there was the Government Training College, which was formally opened in January 1927 and renamed the Prince of Wales School and College, Achimota. Among its most famous instructors was Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey, the eminent educator, and its alumni include Kwame Nkrumah who obtained his teacher's certificate from the college in 1930. These colleges were often affiliated with and provided courses, examinations, and qualifications from British universities.

In the French colonies, higher education was hampered by the preference among both the colonial authorities and the African elites, spawned by the policies and ideology of assimilation, for higher education in the metropole. Moreover, missionary provision of education was rather limited, which undermined the development of primary and secondary education that could feed into higher education. The institutions of higher education established before the war included the French Western Africa Medical Training Institution founded in 1918 in Dakar, the William Ponty School established in Goree in 1903 that provided some medical training and teacher training, schools of marine engineering and veterinary medicine in Goree and Bamako, respectively, and a polytechnic also in Bamako.

It was not until the end of the Second World War that more systematic efforts were undertaken by colonial governments to establish higher education. In the British colonies, the new era started with the establishment of university colleges in Nigeria (Ibadan in 1947), Ghana (Legon in 1948), Sudan (Khartoum in 1949 from the merger of the Gordon Memorial College and the Kitchener Medical School), and Uganda (Makerere was upgraded in 1949). In addition, in Kenya the Royal Technical College was established in Nairobi in 1951, and further south the University College of Salisbury was formed in 1953 and renamed two years later as the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Meanwhile, Fourah Bay College became the University College of Sierra Leone. Most of these new or upgraded university colleges served as

regional universities and were affiliated with and awarded degrees of the University of London.

After the war French universities also set up a few overseas campuses in the colonies. The University of Paris established Institutes of Higher Studies in Tunis in 1945, and together with the University of Bordeaux, in Dakar in 1950 and Antananarivo in 1955 that became the University of Dakar in 1957 and the University of Antananarivo in 1960, respectively. In Algeria access to the University of Algiers for Algerians was expanded slightly, although by the time of the Algerian revolution in 1952 there were only 1,000 Algerian university graduates. In the rest of the French colonial empire university education had to await independence.

The Belgians in the Congo followed the French practice as the Catholic University of Louvain established the Lovanium (little Louvain) University Centre in 1949, with which it became affiliated in 1954, while the state created the Official University in 1956 in Lubumbashi. Lovanium also catered for students from Rwanda and Burundi. In the Portuguese colonies higher education lagged behind until the turn of the 1960s. In Angola, institutions to train priests were formed in 1958 in Luanda and Huambo, followed by the establishment in 1962 of two General University Studies in Angola and Mozambique as branches of the Portuguese university system that were converted in 1968 into the Universities of Angola and Lourenço Marques, respectively.

In the meantime, in South Africa where apartheid had been established in 1948 higher education became even more racially segregated than before. Blacks were no longer allowed to attend the “white” universities without special government approval and separate universities were created for Africans in the so-called self-governing homelands and for Coloreds and Indians in the major cities. By 1994, the year that ushered in the country’s first democratically elected government, there were 36 higher education institutions consisting of 21 universities and 15 technikons, of which 19 were for whites, 2 for coloreds, 2 for Indians and 13 for Africans. Needless to say, higher education was far better resourced for whites than for the other races with the Africans at the bottom. In Namibia, under South African occupation from the end of the First World War until independence in 1990, college education started as late as 1980 with the establishment of the Academy for Tertiary Education, followed in 1985 by the formation of the Technikon of Namibia, and the College for Out-of-School Training.

Decolonization was a staggered process as African countries got independent at different times, but the bulk of them did so in the 1950s and 1960s. Colonial rule left behind very few universities, the majority of countries did not even have a single university, so that one of the key challenges for the new independent states was to establish or expand their higher education systems. Also, since the few existing universities were patterned on European models and were rather elitist there was the need to make them more relevant to Africa’s developmental needs and socio-cultural contexts and more accessible to students of different social backgrounds.

Across Africa the growth in higher education after independence was nothing short of phenomenal. The new states embarked on ambitious development programs in which universities were seen as central for training a highly skilled labor force, creating and

reproducing a national elite, and enhancing national prestige. The new national universities were quite diverse and flexible in their structures and models. On the whole, they were much larger in size than their colonial predecessors, broader in their missions, and they expanded their disciplinary and curricula offerings from the arts and social sciences to include professional fields of study such as business, medicine and engineering, and they incorporated graduate programs.

In 1960, often taken as the year of African independence, there were an estimated 120,000 students in African universities; the number jumped to 782,503 in 1975 and to 3,461,822 in 1995, and presently it is probably around 5 million. Similarly, the number of universities grew from less than three-dozen in 1960 to more than four hundred in 1995 and several hundred more have perhaps been introduced since then with the explosion of private universities. Today, tertiary education exists in all African countries, although the systems vary enormously in terms of size and levels of development and internal differentiation. For example, in 1995 the largest concentration of university students was in Egypt (850,051), followed by South Africa (617,897), Nigeria (404,969), Algeria (347,410), and Morocco (294,502). In contrast, in the same year there were 23 countries with fewer than 10,000 university students.

There were also sharp gender differences in terms of access to higher education. While several countries had managed to attain gender parity at the primary and secondary levels by 2000, very few had managed to do so at the tertiary level. The exceptions were Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, and South Africa. The gender gap also manifested itself in fields of study and faculty distribution. Women were concentrated in the humanities and social sciences, while they were grossly underrepresented in the sciences and most of the professional fields. As multi-ethnic, sometimes multi-racial, and invariably class societies, access to university education in African countries was further differentiated according to ethnicity, race, and class, as well as, in some cases, religious and cultural affiliations. Class became increasingly salient as the African middle classes grew rapidly after independence, in many cases thanks to the establishment or expansion of university education itself, and sought to reproduce themselves.

The massive expansion of education across the continent not only led to huge improvements in the African human capital stock, it also laid the institutional basis for the social production of African intellectual capacities and communities. But Africa remained the least educated continent in the world, with a tertiary gross enrollment ratio of less than 5 percent, as compared to 10 percent for the low- and middle-income countries and 58 percent for the high-income countries. The challenges facing African higher education deepened with the imposition in the 1980s and 1990s of draconian structural adjustment programs (SAPs) by the international financial institutions including the World Bank that led to severe government cutbacks in social expenditures, including education, especially for higher education whose rates of social return were deemed by the supporters of neo-liberalism to be lower than for primary education.

Thus from the 1980s even as the number of colleges and universities continued to expand, it became increasingly evident that the higher education system in many countries was in crisis, which was expressed in declining state funding, falling instructional standards, poorly equipped libraries and laboratories, shrinking wages and faculty morale. Academics increasingly resorted to consultancies or they became part of the “brain drain” as they sought refuge in other sectors at home or universities abroad. The costs on teaching, research, and Africa’s capacity to produce highly skilled human capital were predictably high.

There were other responses to the crisis besides increasing academic labor migration. One was the proliferation of regional research networks, the growth of an academic NGO sector. Examples include the Dakar-based Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), and the Nairobi based International Institute of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE). These organizations and networks provided crucial support for basic and applied research, both individual and collaborative, and offered training, internships, and fellowships to graduate students.

Another response was seen in the explosion in private universities and the privatization of programs and funding sources in public universities, both of which were manifestations of the growing liberalization of African higher education. The private universities can be distinguished in terms of their institutional types (their status – not-for-profit and for-profit; identity – religious and secular; and focus – business, Christian or Islamic), programs and levels, staffing and funding, and governance structures and regulation. While these universities faced numerous challenges, by the beginning of the 2000s they had begun to outstrip the number of public universities in some countries, a development that profoundly and permanently altered the terrain of higher education.

From the late 1990s African leaders, educators, researchers, and external donors became increasingly aware of the challenges facing African higher education and the need for renewal if the continent was to achieve higher rates of growth and development and compete in an increasingly knowledge intensive global economy. The reform agenda has centered on five broad sets of issues, even if expressions of concern have yet to be matched by the provision of adequate resources. First, the need to examine systematically the philosophical foundations of African universities is widely recognized. Included in this context are issues pertaining to the principles underpinning public higher education in an era of privatization, the conception, content and consequences of the reforms currently being undertaken across the continent, and the public-private interface in African higher education systems.

The second set of issues center on management, how African universities are grappling with the challenges of quality control, funding, governance, and management in response to the establishment of new regulatory regimes, growing pressures for finding alternative sources of funding, changing demographics and massification, increasing demands for access and equity for underrepresented groups including women, and the emergence of new forms of student and faculty politics in the face of democratization in the wider society. Third, there are pedagogical and paradigmatic issues, ranging from the languages of tuition in African universities and

educational systems as a whole to the dynamics of knowledge production – the societal relevance of the knowledges produced in African higher education systems and how those knowledges are disseminated and consumed by students, scholarly communities, and the wider public.

Fourth, the role of universities in the pursuit of the historic project of Africa nationalism: decolonization, development, democratization, nation-building and regional integration is under scrutiny. Included in this regard are questions of the uneven and changing relations between universities and the state, civil society, and industry, as well as the role of universities in helping to manage and resolve the various crises that confront the African continent from civil conflicts to disease epidemics including HIV/AIDS. Also, the part universities have played and can play in future to promote or undermine the Pan-African project is of great interest as African states, through the African Union, renew their efforts to achieve closer integration within Africa and between Africa and its diasporas.

Finally, there is the question of globalization, the impact of trends associated with the new information and communication technologies, the expansion of transborder or transnational provision of higher education, and trade in educational services under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) regime. Critical in this context for Africa is the changing role of external donors from the philanthropic foundations to the World Bank and other international financial institutions and multilateral agencies. The impact of these trends on African higher education and vice-versa are of utmost importance and provide one area of fruitful collaboration between researchers from Africa and other world regions.

The challenges facing African universities are serious and disquieting, but higher education in Africa has a long history and it will have a long future. And the onus for ensuring that such a future is a healthy and productive one lies primarily with African leaders, educators, and scholars, who cannot afford the morbid indulgences of Afropessimism.