
Alternative Models to Traditional Higher Education: Market Demand, Networks, and Private Sector Challenges¹

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Abstract

This paper looks at the pluralization of knowledges and knowledge-producing institutions and at the complexification of the higher education systems in sub-Saharan Africa. It highlights the evolution of “traditional” institutions and the factors that led to such an evolution, the development of alternative models, the spread of knowledge networks, and the challenges of private sector involvement in higher education. With globalization, liberalization, and democratization came new “modes” of higher learning, and new kinds of knowledges. “Traditional” models have been forced to evolve, adapt, and reinvent themselves in the context of these changes, and of shifts in development paradigms and rapid global and local economic and technological transformations. There seems to be a gradual evolution towards more hybrid forms and models of higher education. However, the paper argues that, despite the rapid increase in the numbers and variety of institutions and the pluralization of knowledges, both the traditional institutional forms and modes and the traditional kinds of scientific knowledge are, in the case of Africa, likely to remain the dominant forms for the foreseeable future.

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Résumé

Cette contribution aborde la question de la pluralisation du savoir et des institutions de production du savoir, mais également la question de la complexification des systèmes de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique subsaharienne. Il met en lumière l'évolution des institutions « traditionnelles », et les facteurs ayant mené à une telle évolution, de même que le développement de modèles alternatifs, l'extension des réseaux de savoir et les défis posés par l'implication du secteur privé dans l'enseignement supérieur. La mondialisation, la libéralisation et la démocratisation ont entraîné avec elles de nouveaux « modes » d'apprentissage et de nouvelles formes de savoir. Les « modèles traditionnels » ont été contraints d'évoluer, de s'adapter et de se réinventer dans le contexte de ces changements et des évolutions en matière de paradigmes de développement, mais également dans le contexte des rapides transformations locales, économiques et technologiques. Il semble y avoir une évolution progressive vers des formes et des modèles de l'enseignement plus hybrides. Cependant, l'article affirme que malgré l'augmentation rapide du nombre et de la variété des institutions, et malgré la pluralisation du savoir, les formes et modes institutionnels traditionnels, ainsi que les formes traditionnelles de connaissance scientifique pourraient bien conserver leur place dominante dans un futur proche pour ce qui est de l'Afrique.

Higher education in Africa is often seen as a developmental issue, and development was conceptualized as a process that should lead African and other developing societies to the level of development of Europe and North America today. Education (especially higher education) was both a sector to be developed and an instrument in the development of other sectors. As development paradigms have shifted, so have the conceptions of higher education and its status and role in the so-called developing countries. Higher education systems have become more complex and more diversified, as globalization, liberalization, the development of new technologies, and a number of other changes in the social, economic, and political environment have unfolded. This paper looks at the pluralization and complexification of the higher education landscape in Africa, highlighting the evolution of the “traditional” institutions, the development of alternative models and the spread of knowledge networks, and the challenges of private sector involvement in higher education.

The Problem

A wide range of policy changes has developed in African higher education. During the initial postindependence period, there was a great deal of enthusiasm for higher education. This was followed by a phase when higher education

was not a priority, due to severe economic crises and the subsequent implementation of structural adjustment programs (SAPs). Today, knowledge is said to be as important a factor of production as physical capital. In *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*, the Task Force on Higher Education and Society (2000) argues, “The world economy is changing as knowledge supplants physical capital as the source of present (and future) wealth” (p. 9). Similarly, a recent World Bank report (2002: 1) draws attention to the “increasing importance of knowledge as a principal driver of growth” (p. 1). Knowledge has long been recognized as both a resource and a source of power in local and global relations. The rediscovery of its importance in recent years, including for developing countries, is likely a result of the information revolution, which is clearly knowledge based and knowledge driven.

Much of modern day research-based knowledge is produced and transmitted across generations in higher education institutions. The growing importance of knowledge makes higher education more important than ever, as a World Bank (2002: 1) report indicates:

The role of education in general and of tertiary education in particular, is now more influential than ever in the construction of knowledge economies and democratic societies. Tertiary education is indeed central to the creation of intellectual capacity on which knowledge production and utilization depend and to the promotion of the lifelong-learning practices necessary for updating people’s knowledge and skills.

But what kind of tertiary or higher education are we talking about, and where and how is it being delivered?² Higher education systems are made up of three elements: the institutions of higher education; the organizations directly involved in financing, managing, or operating higher education systems; and “the rules that guide institutional and individual behavior and interactions among the various actors” (Task Force 2000: 46).

In Africa in the 1960s and 1980s, the public universities were almost the only institutions of higher education and research. The university therefore became a multi-purpose institution which has evolved well away from its original design as a liberal arts college: It functioned as a professional education institution and as

an institution for mass undergraduate training, extra-mural studies, graduate education, high level research, functions that in more advanced settings are typically handled by a system of separate, but interdependent institutions. Consequently, national higher education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa may be stylized as thin and undifferentiated. At their

heart lies one or a few institutions expected to discharge a wide range of functions relating to learning and knowledge creation. (Fine 1997: 6–7)

In the 1970s and 1980s, several regional knowledge networks were created, partly as a consequence of the crises of the universities. In the 1980s and 1990s, higher education institutions became much more diversified, as private universities, independent institutes, professional schools, and other degree-granting institutions mushroomed. The links between these different tertiary education institutions are extremely complex.

With globalization, liberalization, and democratization also come new modes of higher learning and new kinds of knowledge that are more problem oriented than the knowledge produced in the traditional higher education and research institutions (Kraak 2000a). There has been a great deal of interest in these new modes, variously referred to as “Mode Two” or “Alternative Models” (Gibbons, 2000; Gibbons et al. 1994; Kraak 2000a; Kraak 2000b; World Bank 2002). The discussion on higher education is therefore partly centered on: (a) the institutions of education and research, (b) the kinds of knowledge, and (c) the modes of its delivery. Institutions are sometimes classified according to the kinds of training (academic or vocational) or knowledge they offer or the modes of delivery; for instance, there is a distinction between “contact” and “distance teaching” universities. An emerging trend that is likely to become more and more important, however, is one of mixed modes in which the same institutions engage in both contact and some form of distance teaching and in producing various kinds of knowledge. As traditional models evolve, adapt, and reinvent themselves, there seems to be a gradual evolution towards more hybrid forms of higher education institutions.

However, in Africa, a recent series of workshops and seminars and a number of recent studies and inventories of the social sciences pointed to both a rapid increase in the numbers and variety of institutions and a pluralization of knowledge, and to the continued dominance of both the traditional institutional forms and modes, and of traditional kinds of scientific knowledge (Sall, Yap, & Felleron 2002).³

Thus, in Africa, the traditional forms of higher education and scientific knowledge are likely to continue to be the dominant forms for the foreseeable future. This is partly due to the fact that two key factors in the current transformation of knowledge systems worldwide—access to new information and communications technologies and the rates of Internet connectivity and enrollment in higher education—are much lower across Africa than in other regions. Moreover, sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by poverty, whereas the capital investments required and the recurrent costs of the new technologies that are revolutionizing the higher education field are extremely high (World Bank,

2002: 39). This is one reason why the discussion on university education reform has centered on ways to address the fiscal challenges, i.e., to mobilize the financial resources needed merely to operate, let alone revolutionize, higher education institutions. Government funding is largely devoted to establishing the basic infrastructure and covering recurrent costs, and there also is a heavy dependence on external donor funding. Private sector involvement in funding higher education is still marginal, although it is gradually increasing. The new public and private institutions, like the emerging knowledge networks, have so far been playing a complementary role to that of the traditional institutions. However, with the twin processes of adjustment and political liberalization, the rules governing the higher education system are evolving, and there are important changes taking place in the traditional institutions as well.

To understand these complex relationships and challenges before making policy recommendations to strengthen the role of higher education in the development enterprise across Africa, we need to ask: (a) What are the driving forces behind the emergence and spread of the alternative models of higher education? (b) How are the various higher education models affecting the capacity of African societies to produce an intelligentsia for themselves, one that is capable of helping Africa think through the current crises and face the challenges of globalization and development?, and (c) What kinds of impacts are the higher education models having on Africa's overall development process?

Much of the recent literature on the transformation of the higher education sector in both the industrialized and developing countries suggests that the process is demand driven, at least in part. There are various kinds of demand. Demand for higher education results from the proliferation of basic education with larger numbers of students who complete high school. With the increasing number of students comes a demand for higher education institutions that can develop, teach, and certify higher order skills. And of course, there is a demand for graduates, both highly specialized and generalist. All this comes under market demand, a concept I return to later in this paper.

What is certain, however, is that a wide range of factors can account for the changes. The demand for higher education and higher education institutions is extremely high and much more varied than it was in the early 1960s, before we entered the current phase of globalization and before the information technology (IT) revolution. Higher education systems have been responding to the pressures in various ways. Some, if not most, of the changes in the higher education systems resulted from attempts to adapt and survive in the face of new challenges; and in some cases, institutions have attempted to exploit new opportunities. In most SSA countries, government policies in the field of higher education have been much more reactive than proactive. Yet there now seems

to be an emerging consensus on the need for well thought out and carefully framed state policies to govern the higher education systems in ways that maximize the public good while enabling institutions to perform both traditional and new roles to respond to public and private demands emanating from a wide range of actors.

The public university remains the dominant feature of the higher education landscape in Africa, although this situation is changing as private (commercial, religious oriented, and other kinds of institutions) begin to equal and, in some cases, even outnumber the state universities. This is the case in Sudan where there is one public and 24 private, mostly Islamic, universities (Szanton & Manyika 2002: 7). This is happening in Uganda (Kwesiga et al. 2001), Zimbabwe (Nhema 2000), Senegal, and elsewhere. The dominance of the public university is, however, not only numerical; it is also strategic in terms of the type and quality of teaching and research being offered and in terms of the nature of the relationships linking them to the private institutions. I would, therefore, further argue that developing plural and well-managed higher education *systems* centered on public flagship universities, with adequate resources, is one of the realistic (and most needed) policy options for Africa. There is a need both for multi-institutional public systems, and for the multitasking, multilevel research-cum-teaching university also known as the “flagship” university.

Traditional Higher Education

In this section I look at the expansion of traditional higher education in sub-Saharan Africa and show that this process was part and parcel of the state, nation-building, and development processes in the postcolonial era.⁴ The processes were interlinked and were perceived by the elites of Africa as necessary to mutually reinforce one another (Ajayi et al. 1996; Hagan 1994; Samoff & Carrol 2002; Mkandawire 1999; Sawyerr 2002). As Samoff and Carrol (2002) have noted:

Education would not only make [a] new society but would also shape the new people who would inhabit and manage society. . . . As the capstone of the education system, higher education had a special place in that vision. Universities were to educate the thinkers and inventors, the policy and decision makers, the teachers of the teachers, the leaders of the leaders. (p. 7)

By traditional higher education, I mean education dispensed in tertiary education institutions such as public and private universities, colleges, polytechnics, professional training schools and the French Instituts de Formation Professionnelle (IFP), previously called Instituts Universitaires de Technologie

(IUT). It follows from the description of the situation in the previous section, therefore, that traditional higher education, for most Africans, would be university education; and most universities were, and still are, public universities.

The institutional base for knowledge production was very narrow during the first decades of independence. Higher education in Africa is a postcolonial phenomenon. At the time of independence, or roughly the late 1950s and early 1960s, the total number of universities and university colleges in sub-Saharan Africa, outside of South Africa, was fewer than 10. In its 1999 *Guide to Higher Education in Africa*, the Association of African Universities (AAU) identified 174 institutions officially designated as universities in the 40 countries of sub-Saharan Africa (AAU 1999; Sawyerr 2002); Today, there are some 175 universities in sub-Saharan Africa, and The Gambia, which was not included in the AAU survey, is also now developing a university (Szanton & Manyika 2002: 7). These institutions are very unevenly distributed within sub-Saharan Africa: South Africa and Nigeria together account for almost half of the sub-Saharan Africa universities. According to the AAU *Guide*, 26 of the countries it covers indicate that they have only one or two universities, almost all of which are public or state institutions.

The explanation for this exponential growth is partly in the fact that the university was “a fruit of nationalism” (Mamdani 1998: 2). It became one of the symbols for independent statehood. “Along with a national flag and a national anthem, a national university came to symbolize national independence” (Mamdani 1998: 2). However, probably more important than the symbolic value of the university were the high hopes that the leaders of the independence movements placed in this institution. Independence was sought (and fought for) as a necessary step towards the elimination of poverty, ignorance, and disease. The fight against these ills became a real obsession for many independence leaders. It was assumed that “poverty and exploitation could be defeated by social action” and that “such action could only be facilitated by social science knowledge” (Mkandawire 1999: 28). A premium was also placed on science and technology.

Whichever way one looks at it—as a symbol of independent statehood, as a useful instrument for human capital formation and for fighting poverty and ignorance, or as a site for knowledge production—the university of the newly independent states was bound to be a public institution, especially as the indigenous private sector was extremely weak. The state took upon itself to provide education and therefore established as many basic and higher education institutions as it possibly could. From the “one country, one university syndrome” (Mamdani 1998), many countries now have several universities. Nowhere else

is this spectacular development more visible than in Nigeria where there were only two universities at the beginning of the 1960s: Ibadan, created in 1948, and Nsukka, symbolically inaugurated the day after independence was obtained in 1960 (Ajayi, Goma & Johnson 1996; Lebeau 1997). Now Nigeria has 44 universities, only five of which are private; the rest are public universities (federal or state universities).⁵ South Africa is another case of a country with many higher education institutions: 21 universities and 15 technikons, one of which is private.⁶ Some foreign universities have begun operating in South Africa—for example, the Australian National University and the University of London. There is, however, a sense among academics that these foreign universities are not collaborators but predators that steal teachers from the local (public) universities.

One effect of the “one country, one university” syndrome was the fragmentation of the higher education sector. Many universities were originally intended to be regional higher education and/or research institutions. The University of East Africa, some of whose constituent colleges were originally founded in the 1920s, became three distinct national universities in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. The University of Dakar was founded in the late 1950s, as a regional university; but following independence, each of the francophone West African countries also created its own university. The Makerere Institute of Social Research in Kampala, and the Dakar-based Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire both started off as regional institutes for East and West Africa respectively. They no longer serve this purpose. Language and regional barriers made the fragmentation even more critical and inhibited the growth of lively communities of research and publishing and access to scholarly works produced in different countries, subregions, and languages.

State creation and support for public universities later turned out to be a mixed blessing. From being a symbol of independent statehood, the university became both an instrument and a site for patronage politics. Moreover the “one nation, one university” syndrome brought academics face to face with the state, which often regarded critical scholarship with apprehension, and sometimes outright suspicion. Frequent confrontations occurred between the state and academics (CODESRIA 1996; Mamdani 1998; Mkandawire 1997). The postcolonial state was highly centralized with power concentrated in the hands of the head of state and the few people around him. It had a literal aversion to critical thinking. Academic freedom was, therefore, often violated through both state harassment and neglect.

Another great challenge to African higher education and research, however, was the restriction of the institutional autonomy of the universities. According to Ajayi et al. (1996: 95)

The governments cared much less about the curricula than about administrative control—the appointment of the Chancellor, members of the Council, Vice-Chancellor and, if possible, deans and Heads of Department. The aim was to ensure political support or, at all events, to eliminate opposition within the university community.

Open contestation of the very concept of academic freedom occurred in the context of newly independent, developing countries, including by some of the most highly respected leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana (Diouf & Mamdani 1994; CODESRIA 1996; Mkwandawire 1999).

The newly established independent governments made their impact felt in asserting their sovereign rights to own and to control their universities. This was made manifest in the failure to sustain attempts to create inter-territorial or regional centers of higher education. The intention of governments in seeking to control the universities was usually stated as being to make them more responsive to development plans (Ajayi et al. 1996: 95)

For a time, calls for academic freedom and institutional autonomy came mainly from expatriate academics. Many local academics tended to both sympathize with the leaders of the country and to favor the Africanization of the university, which was seen as both a part of and a factor in the process of Africanization of the state, the administration, and of other institutions.

However, with all its problems, the public university did provide the services expected of it. Enrollment rates, although far below what they are in the industrialized countries and in other regions of the developing world kept rising (World Bank 2001). Even in the worst years of the crises (roughly the mid-1980s), the social value of the university degree remained quite high, judging by the growing numbers of secondary school graduates seeking admission to the university (Sall, Lebeau & Kassimir 2002). Nigeria's universities and polytechnics «barely admit up to 20% of qualified candidates annually» (Amuwo 2001: 18). Universities were unable to cope with the rising demand, especially as state funding dwindled. Aggregate funding to federal universities during 1980–1985, (i.e., just before structural adjustment programs and policies were introduced) was 2.7 billion Naira,⁷ comprising 1.7 billion Naira in recurrent grants and 1 billion in capital grants. By 1987, the recurrent grant to the universities was reduced to just 30% of the original amount. By 1989, the grants available to the universities were only sufficient to pay staff salaries. The decline in funding was also evident in terms of allocations per student (in constant Naira): from 3,424 in 1975–1976, to 536 in 1988–1989. According to the

National Universities Commission of Nigeria, subsidies per student declined from N697 in 1991 to N362 in 2000 (Agbu 2001).

This reduction of their resources, at a time when student populations were increasing, put the universities in extremely difficult situations. The financial and governance crises had negative impacts on infrastructure, on the quality of training and research, and on the market value of the university degrees. At the same time, currencies were losing value. Basic commodities and services becoming less and less affordable, even for university lecturers.

Responses to the crises took several forms, and the responses themselves have in some cases given rise to new problems. First, the reform of the higher education sector was included in the structural adjustment packages of the 1980s and 1990s. Only in a few cases were the reform measures designed in a more or less participatory way (involving academic staff associations, at least in the planning stages, as was the case in Senegal). The higher education sector reforms had varying degrees of success. Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda are often cited as relatively successful cases. The main criteria for gauging the success of the reforms include funding, diversification of courses, and the subsequent improvement of academic staff salaries. From being totally dependent on state funding for its running costs, Makerere University now generates more than 30% of its revenue internally (Task Force 2000: 54; Mukuma 2001: 107–111). One of the key measures taken to generate revenue was “the establishment of a quota of fee-paying students over and above the number supported by the government subvention” (Sawyer 2002: 47). Makerere also benefited from very generous donor support. The experience is not, however, without its own problems, which include the decline of the quality of courses and degrees to the extent that the university is now ranked behind two of the new and small private universities in terms of the quality of the education; worsening inequities in access and the widening of the gap between so-called “achieving” university faculties and departments (i.e., those able to generate revenue by charging fees and expanding student intake or by attracting donor funds) and the “nonachieving faculties” (e.g., the faculty of medicine, where student intake has to be strictly controlled to maintain quality). Moreover, 60% of the funds still come from the government of Uganda.

Second, at the individual level, lecturers remaining at African universities resorted to consultancy, petty trading, teaching extra classes, etc., in order to earn the equivalent of a few dollars. Others established independent research centers and NGOs and tried to access donor funding. Many of the universities have been trying to regulate the craze for consultancies but have met with limited success. Among the serious consequences of this condition are the fur-

ther shortening of time for research and the gradual decline of the quality of teaching.

Third, many of the universities have opened satellite campuses and offered courses and degree programs such as MBAs for fee-paying students, leased out parts of campus premises to private companies, rented out buildings acquired in the earlier period of relative prosperity, and so forth. However, like the spread of franchise universities and “off-shore campuses,” the establishment of satellite campuses is a practice that one finds in almost all regions of the world (World Bank 2002: 33).

Fourth, regional knowledge networks have taken on some of the graduate training and set up national and regional research networks among scholars by field or issue, hold workshops on methodology and how to strengthen research capacity for more junior scholars, sponsor summer institutes and fellowship programs for more senior scholars, and undertake scholarly publishing (including textbooks), etc. to support engagement in broader scholarly debates.

Alternative models to the traditional higher education system have emerged as a result. But before examining these alternative models, I would like to say a few words about the market demands and the networks that appeared in response to some of the demands and challenges.

Market Demands and Networks

I take “market” here to mean not only the labor market but also, more generally, the market for higher education and the market for goods and services produced by higher education institutions. The “goods” produced by these institutions could be public or private.

Market Demands

Traditional higher education institutions were mainly seen as benefiting “the nation” as producers of public good. The latter may include the response to private demands of individuals for training or of companies for trained human power (Sall, Lebeau & Kassimir 2002). Hence the state plays an important role in setting them up and supporting them. Even the World Bank (2002) now argues that “continued government support of tertiary education is justified by three important considerations: the existence of externalities from tertiary education, equity issues, and the supportive role of tertiary education in the education system as a whole” (p. xxi). Notwithstanding such recognition of the critical public roles that they play, higher education institutions are moving toward a model where they are seen more and more like business enterprises. This development is definitely a sign of the times, a manifestation of a major paradigm shift.

In Africa, the entrepreneurial university, “characterized by increasing market-like behavior and governance” (Subotzky 1999), is a phenomenon of the 1990s and the postadjustment years. Much of this new development is part of the global neo-liberal consensus, which, for Africans, came in the wake of the structural adjustment programs. It could also partly be attributed to the information and communication technology (ICT) revolution. The defining principle of the entrepreneurial university is the adoption and spread of market principles in the management and actual functioning of higher education and research institutions. Subotzky (1999) has argued: “Within the neo-liberal global consensus, this primarily serves the market and the private good.” These developments pose a challenge to the traditional public universities who are faced with “new missions, new demands, and new competitors” (World Bank 2001: 6). The impact can also be felt in the practice of data processing and analysis, in publishing, in access to documentation, and in the management of libraries (Altbach & Teferra 1998). The latter now involves not only the management of stocks but also the management of flows of information, including both raw and processed data.

As for the supply side of the equation, not only have private universities entered the scene, but public universities are also now confronted with reduced budgets and increasing demands for rationalization and marketability. The primary roles of the public universities in serving the public good, reproducing elites, producing and disseminating knowledge, and providing services to individuals, groups, and the nation-state and its different constituents (communities, the private sector, and, more recently, the plethora of nongovernmental organizations) have, however, hardly changed. If that is the case, then what has changed?

When the market is defined as young people in search of higher education opportunities and parents looking for educational opportunities for their children, the demands have not changed in nature. What have changed are the kinds of courses, training, and degrees now in high demand, and the scope and massification of the demand for higher education. This change could be seen as a measure of success for the postcolonial state: The numbers of secondary school graduates have increased tremendously, partly as a result of the spread of basic education. The traditional university’s adaptation process has been much slower than the rise in the demand, often resulting in overcrowding and massification (Task Force 2001). The quality of the goods and services provided by the traditional institutions has also become unsatisfactory, except in a few disciplines and branches. In many countries, there are thousands of unemployed degree holders. Amuwo (2001: 19) cites a World Bank report that “graduate skills have steadily deteriorated over the past decade” yet, “most astonish-

ing in this report is the claim that the number of graduates in Nigeria outstrips the absorptive capacity of the economy.” This would mean that the 60 higher education institutions in Nigeria that, together, “barely admit up to 20% of qualified candidates” are “overproducing” graduates.

More important, however, is the challenge to the traditional idea of the university that is implicit in such statements. This challenge is also implicit in the fascination for the so-called “Mode Two” types of knowledge and higher education institutions referred to at the beginning of this paper. The focus is on graduate unemployment, which is seen as proof of the failure of traditional higher education. The solutions to both graduate unemployment and to the rising demand for higher education are said to be not only in the transformation of the traditional institutions into more entrepreneurial institutions but also in the promotion and development of alternative models, mainly of the Mode Two kinds. This approach is also supposedly the way to solve the problems of access to higher education, while preparing Africa for a better position in the global economy. These arguments are certainly pertinent in some respects. What they fail to address, however, are the problems of equity that become more critical when high fees are charged by public or private universities and colleges; the devaluation of basic research that has resulted from the wild craze for marketability in both the public and private institutions; and the fact that higher education is definitely not the only cause of labor market problems.

Moreover, the fact that Nigerian higher education institutions, for instance, “barely admit up to 20% of qualified candidates” could also be an indication of excess demand. There is, therefore, a lot of room for private sector involvement, and there may well be business opportunities in higher education that the private sector could fill. These opportunities became more important as both the fiscal crises of the state and the subsequent implementation of structural adjustment programs restricted public spending on higher education. Private sector involvement leading to the establishment of private higher education institutions would be a way of absorbing the excess demand, but the consequence could well be the production of larger numbers of graduates than the economy is able to employ unless there are structural changes leading to the creation of additional employment opportunities. The development of different curricula, or different types of training or levels of degrees, increases the chances of new graduates finding jobs.

The market has been unable to provide adequate solutions to Africa’s problems. Higher education and research are less likely to be areas where market solutions will work. As the authors of the Task Force on Higher Education and Society Report (2001: 11) said:

On its own, the market will certainly not devise [quality higher education systems]. Markets require profit and this can crowd out important educational duties and opportunities. Basic sciences and the humanities, for example, are essential for national development. They are likely to be under-funded, unless they are actively encouraged by leaders in education who have the resources to realize this vision.

In its report, *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*, the World Bank (2001) makes similar arguments in favor of continued state support to higher education. Makerere University in Uganda is one of the institutions that took the lead in adopting market principles of management as a way of coping with the financial starvation that it faced in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Mahmood Mamdani's (2001) keynote address to the social science faculty at Makerere University:

The tendency was to expand courses for programs for (which) there was market demand, and shed courses and demands for which demand lagged. In the process, the student body got differentiated between those who didn't pay fees and those who did, with different entrance requirements for each group, just as programs began to be differentiated between day-time courses for students on scholarships and evening courses for fee-paying counterparts. The more these trends gathered momentum, the more higher education turned into a contract between the university and the fee-paying student, and less between the university and society. (Quoted in Mukuma 2001: 14; Mamdani, cited in Mukuma 2001: 14)

An entirely demand-driven approach to higher education is quite hard to imagine, especially as both the state sector and industry, which are the two main sectors expected to generate the demand in Africa, are bedeviled with problems. Examples of marketable courses or disciplines often include medicine, engineering, computer science, and business administration. However, unemployed holders of these degrees can be found in Senegal, Morocco, and several other countries. The problem, therefore, is not only with the university or the type of higher education being provided, but also with the nature and size of the market. The diversification of higher education institutions and types of knowledge is probably a response to market demands but only in part.

Networks

Networking is an important part of research and knowledge production and dissemination. In Africa, many of the research networks came into being in the 1980s and 1990s as a response to the difficulties being encountered by univer-

sities. Foreign donors established some of these networks. Others came out of indigenous initiatives. The latter include the Council for the Development of Social Sciences in Africa (CODESRIA), a regional social science network established by African public universities and institutes in 1973. CODESRIA's main objectives were to promote social science research and research-based publishing in Africa and to overcome the linguistic barriers inherited from colonialism. Other regional networks and discipline-based associations shared these objectives. These networks became not only important sites for knowledge production and extremely lively debates, but also important actors in the forging and strengthening of a regional scientific community (Mkandawire 1997, 1999).

The networks have gradually developed into institutions that established and coordinated several other research networks. They also initiated several research capacity strengthening projects. After having benefited from much donor support, the role of networks has recently been the subject of debates again, especially as universities appear to be regaining some of the momentum that they lost in the crisis years. Donors are now keenly interested in supporting universities whose role in the production of knowledge and in human capital formation for the global economy is crucial. The role and relevance of the networks is therefore being questioned and their links with the universities debated.

Yet with the possible exceptions of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), and the Association of African Universities (AAU), there is little really known about the actual contribution of regional research councils and networks to the development of national research capacity or the uses of the research generated. Besides evaluations conducted for the agencies that fund them, there are few systematic studies on this issue (Prewitt 1998). In 2001, the Department for Research Cooperation of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA/SAREC) decided to support a study on the role of regional social science councils in the promotion of research and scholarly publishing in Africa undertaken by CODESRIA, the Southern African Regional Institute for Policy Studies (SARIPS), the Organization of Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), and the African Association of Political Science (AAPS).

In the debate on the role of networks, it is sometimes argued that their work should be demand driven—that the universities, research institutes, and centers should set their agenda. It is true that the networks and other regional bodies ought to be responsive to the needs of the universities. However, historically, the networks have been very proactive in their attitudes towards the universities, identifying problems and needs and initiating programs to support them. This characteristic led them to organize capacity-building and strengthen-

ing workshops, M.A. programs in certain disciplines, small grants programs for thesis writing, and research networks at both the national and regional levels. These networks bring together young scholars and senior academics and provide opportunities and space for mentoring and intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Networks have also been very important in providing space for free inquiry and for the defense of research freedom. Equally important is the fact that some of these networks have worked very hard to support the emergence of strong regional and local scientific communities to be in a position to engage policy makers and civil society over both local and global issues.

Sustainability is the key challenge facing all of the networks. Few of the regional networks are making serious efforts to access funds from African governments or the African private sector. If African governments supported indigenous research and autonomous intellectual voices from within the region, they would open more possibilities for obtaining a better knowledge of the range of policy options available to them. Outside of a few countries, such as South Africa and Nigeria, support to regional knowledge networks might be easier to channel through regional bodies such as the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and subregional intergovernmental bodies such the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), and its Southern African equivalent, South Africa Development Community (SADC).

For the national and civil communities, the demand on the higher education and research institutions is a demand for explanations and solutions to the problems of poverty, insecurity, etc. Unrealistic as it may appear, this expectation of higher education is very real. It is a demand on the intelligentsia and their institutions for assistance in making sense of what is going on in the world around them. A few years ago, the Senegalese press ran a debate on what was called the breakdown of intellectuals (“la panne des intellectuels”) who were seen to have failed in providing solutions to the economic and social crises on the continent. Higher education and research institutions are therefore expected to play important public roles. State funding for higher education is mainly based on the understanding that there is public good in higher education (Singh 2001; Jonathan 2001; Subotzky 1999).⁸

The combined effects of globalization, market demands, and other influences on higher education and the various types of responses to these processes have produced a new higher education landscape in Africa. It is one that is becoming increasingly diversified, where institutions and scholars of different generations, different kinds of knowledge, different institutional models, and different modes of delivery coexist. The institutional base of higher education has changed, faculty demographics have changed, and the IT revolution

has caused a paradigm shift in higher education, its aspirations, and its real capacities.

Pluralization, Alternative Models, and Mixed Modes

Nowadays, the very mission of the university is being seriously debated. In the 1960s, the emphasis was on training, mostly in government-owned or -controlled institutions. The 1970s and early 1980s witnessed a significant expansion of academic research capacity both within and outside of the universities, particularly with the spread of knowledge networks and organizations that are owned by the academic community itself. However, the research capacity of a number of universities and university-based institutions and centers was seriously affected by the crises of the 1980s. The networks managed to survive and ease the strain on research budgets by mobilizing donor support. The challenge for both the university and the research institutes and centers is to maintain but rethink their basic or traditional functions, adapt to the new context, and live up to the new challenges.

Issues of governance and sustainable resource bases have become extremely important in the discussions on universities (Carlsson & Wohlgemuth 1996; Wohlgemuth 2002). With the crises and structural adjustment, the universities are faced with the challenges of having to go through deep reforms that may entail the rethinking of their very mandate. Much of the discussion on the need for reform is, however, put in fairly narrow managerial terms, losing sight of the traditional role of the university and of the fact that, historically, as providers of the public good, most universities survived on subventions from the state, grants from private foundations, or both.

Issues of quality and relevance are at the center of most of the discussions about universities and the social sciences. African scholars have been quite mindful of their social relevance and responsibilities. These days, in policy debates and general public discussions, the production of marketable goods, (i.e., works, courses, and graduates) tends to be given priority over academic excellence. In other words, academic excellence is defined more and more by government policy makers in terms of the marketability of the courses and of the outputs (graduates, etc.). If demand in its fullest sense were considered, the market would gauge not only quantity and utility but also research quality through peer review. "Relevance" today tends to imply what can be of immediate "use" or can be "counted."

Across Africa, there has been a dramatic pluralization of types of knowledge and knowledge-producing institutions and sites in recent times. Over the years, universities have lived through different kinds of relationships with the state. The colonial administrations established universities affiliated with met-

ropolitan universities. Those of the former British colonies began as affiliates of the University of London, while Dakar was linked to Bordeaux, France. In the settler colonies of Mozambique and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), universities began as exclusive institutions for the children of settlers. Some of the constituent colleges of the University of East Africa (UEA), such as Makerere College, were founded in 1923 to offer vocational and professional training (Kwesiga et al., 2001). All became national universities when the countries achieved independence; and in 1970, the three campuses and constituent colleges of UEA became three independent national universities (Dar Es Salaam, Makerere and Nairobi).

The roles assigned to the universities changed with independence and, like the newly established universities of newly independent states, participation in the Africanization of administrations, nation building, and development was seen as a primary task. The roles changed again with the introduction of structural adjustment policies in the mid-1980s, with the end of the Cold War, and with the political liberalization of the late 1980s and early 1990s. For the 21 South African universities, the major changes occurred with the official abolition of apartheid and the inauguration of majority rule in 1994. The major differences between historically White universities and historically Black universities are, however, likely to persist for some time. The recent attempt to force some of them to merge with one another is just one of the policies being tried to transform the whole of the South African higher education system and to rid it of the legacy of apartheid.

Second, there has been a diversification of tertiary education institutions. A World Bank (2001) strategy document discusses the emergence of new kinds of tertiary education institutions. The bank distinguishes the traditional institutions (mainly public universities) from those that emerged in two subsequent waves of institutional development:

Over the last two decades, many countries have experienced a remarkable diversification of their tertiary education sectors [as the first wave]. The appearance of a variety of new institutions alongside the traditional universities—short-duration technical institutes and community colleges, polytechnics, distance education centers, and open universities—has created new opportunities to meet the growing social demand. . . .

A second wave of institutional diversification is now discernible with the emergence of new forms of competition in tertiary education that transcend the traditional conceptual, institutional, and geographical boundaries. The new actors in the “borderless” tertiary education market are . . . (a) virtual universities, (b) franchise universities, (c) corpo-

rate universities (media companies, libraries and museums, and other institutions), and (d) education brokers. On the heels of these new actors come software producers, publishers, entertainment firms, and others seeking to tap the potential of an emerging international market in tertiary education. (World Bank 2002: 32-33)

The “second wave” of diversification gave birth to a fifth generation of institutions, such as virtual, franchise, and corporate universities. These came well after what have been called (a) colonial universities, (b) independence and development universities, (c) crisis era universities, and (d) entrepreneurial universities (Aina 1998; Mkandawire 1997 1999; Martin & West 1999; Tadesse 1999). These generations do not entirely replace one another. The birth of new generations, however, forced the older ones to reexamine their ways and adapt to the new situations.

With the increasing use of IT in higher education and in academic research, there is also a gradual shift away from the dominant university paradigm that is based on the idea of physical contact between students and teachers, among students themselves, and among scholars on a given campus. These days, a still small but growing number of public and private universities are looking towards instituting some form of electronically enhanced education programs.⁹ This is not really distance learning, because students come to campus for part of the time, or engage in video and teleconferencing. Distance learning is also spreading. In addition to the University of South Africa, with more than 110,000 students, a number of other open universities have been established, for instance, in Zimbabwe, with a rapidly rising number of students. Several of the public universities of sub-Saharan Africa, such as Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar (UCAD) and the National University of Rwanda are also linked to the African Virtual University (AVU). Increasingly, therefore, there is what one can call a mixed mode of learning, with a combination of direct contact between teachers and students and some form of distance education, or rather, IT-assisted teaching and learning. The University of Pretoria, for instance, currently has 31,000 contact and resident students and 25,000 in a mixed delivery mode (University of Pretoria 2002).

The main obstacles to the further development of these mixed modes include the problem of access to IT. Out of the total population of Africa estimated at about 800 million at the beginning of 2002, only 1 million were IT users. Of these, 84% are in South Africa!¹⁰ Although the figures are changing very rapidly, we are still talking about a very small number of users in Africa, compared to other regions of the world. Moreover, even in South Africa, where the rates are much higher, the universities that want to make maximum use of

new technologies, such as the University of Cape Town and the University of Pretoria, are confronted with problems of bandwidth, expressing needs for satellites and other technologies to be able to transfer not only text but also images and sound. Currently, with a few hundred thousand IT users, who mainly transfer text, the situation is not so critical. However, when there are millions of users, there will be bottlenecks, especially for the transfer of images and sound. The problem is much more critical for the historically disadvantaged institutions of South Africa and for the vast majority of universities of the other countries of sub-Saharan Africa, where levels of connectivity are much lower than they are in South Africa.

As the institutional base has been changing, so has the demographic profile of the scholarly community. Looking at the institutions where scholars obtained their postgraduate training, where they lived and worked afterwards, and the issues they take up, Mkandawire (1995, 1997) argued that there have been three generations of African scholars. The first generation of scholars obtained postgraduate training outside Africa, but returned to the continent to form the nucleus of an African faculty for the new institutions of tertiary education of the 1960s and 1970s. The second generation also received its research training outside of Africa, mainly in the mid-1970s and 1980s; but unlike those of the first generation, many failed to return to Africa. One explanation was the onset of the crises of the mid- to late-1970s and 1980s. The third generation, that of the late 1980s and 1990s, involved much larger numbers of scholars than the previous generations, most of whom did their postgraduate training in Africa at a time when the universities were confronted with many more problems (Mkandawire 1995, 1997).

The typology gives a good sense of the generational changes. However, it needs to be refined to take into consideration the complexities of the trajectories of the scholars, to go beyond the issues of places where training was obtained, and whether or not they returned to Africa. It needs to examine how the concerns, perspectives, and ways scholars relate with the universities and the larger communities evolved with the scholars' generational changes. It is also important to relate generational changes in the community of scholars to the changing institutional generations to produce a better understanding of what is needed today.

The first generation was born and brought up under colonialism and joined the independence movements. Many of them shared nationalist aspirations and statist views of development. Many scholars of the present generation still go outside Africa for their postgraduate training. This comes out quite clearly in both the SIDA/SAREC-commissioned study on Makerere and the other three East and Southern African universities (Kwesiga et al. 2001: 8), and in the SSRC

report on the rate of return of African students who obtained postgraduate degrees in the U.S. (Pires, Kassimir & Brhane 1999). At Makerere, “over the last few decades, Ph.D.s in the social science field were obtained outside Uganda” (Kwesiga et al. 2001: 8). In Uganda, sending junior faculty to other universities in South Africa, Europe, North America, and other countries is one of the ways in which staff development is being carried out and institutional and individual social science research capacity built (Kwesiga et al. 2001: 16).

With the end of apartheid in South Africa, many Eastern and Southern African students and junior faculty now go to South Africa for their postgraduate training (Szanton & Manyika 2002; Kwesiga et al. 2001). The establishment of the USEPHIA and AERC networks, like the joint master’s degree programs developed by the University of Pretoria with the University of Ghana (Legon), Makerere, and other universities, are some of these new ways of promoting partnerships and forms of cooperation in the development of postgraduate education in Africa. There is a need for more research on the challenge of establishing joint programs in postgraduate training and research at the regional and subregional levels. There are also a number of training and capacity-enhancement initiatives involving universities of the industrialized countries, African universities, and the networks, such as the one linking CODESRIA, Northwestern University, and the University of Ghana (Legon).¹¹

Only a few people now do their doctoral studies at distressed universities such as the University of Sierra Leone. For instance, for the academic year 2001–2002, the Department of Political Science had only one new doctoral candidate who is also currently a junior lecturer at the university. The Department of Economics does not offer a Ph.D. program and had only three to four new admissions into its Master’s of Science, Honours Program in the academic year 2001–2002. This means that most of the students who wish to enroll in master’s and doctoral programs in political science or economics must go abroad. Several of those who do their undergraduate degrees in economics pursue a master’s program currently being run by the African Economic Research Consortium in collaboration with several universities which have strong economics departments.

Ph.D.s obtained in Europe and North America, however, tend to be seen as more attractive to the university and to employers in government and in the private sector (Nyamnjoh, 2002). It is also important to find out whether there is a difference in levels and modes of participation in scholarly debates, publishing, etc. For instance, most of the respondents in a study entitled “The Flow of Information: Social and Economic Science in Sub-Saharan Africa” obtained their doctoral degrees from universities based outside of Africa (University of Groningen, 1997).

However, the late 1980s and 1990s can, broadly speaking, be called years of the third generation of scholars, most of whom have done or are doing their postgraduate training in Africa. Student populations have reached extremely high numbers, and the numbers of those who enroll in doctoral programs is also much higher than they were in the 1960s and 1970s (Szanton & Manyika, 2002; Sawyerr 2001), although the rates are still below what they are in the OECD countries. World Bank (2001: 7) figures show that the tertiary education enrollment gap between developing countries and the OECD countries has actually become wider.

The tertiary enrollment rate in the US was 55% compared to an average of 5% for developing countries as a whole. In 1995, the numbers were 81% and 9% respectively. Equally worrisome is the low level of development of postgraduate education in many parts of the world. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, for example, students enrolled in postgraduate programs represent, on average only 2.4% of overall tertiary enrollment, compared to 12.6% in the United States.

The rates are generally even lower in many countries. This has important consequences in terms of differences in research capacities, for instance. The situation is made much more critical by the high rate of turnover in certain faculties, such as the faculty of economics at Edward Mondlane University in Mozambique (Uthuli et al., 2001: 6). Institutional capacity is therefore still quite weak in many universities.

The Small Grants for Thesis Writing Program sponsored by CODESRIA gives a good indication of the significance of the third generation. Between 1989 and 2001, the program has funded about 1,200 masters and doctoral theses, and the total number of applicants is five times higher. OSSREA, AERC, and other institutions have similar programs. In the last ten years, the CODESRIA Industrial (now Economic) Policies Network also awarded nearly 200 research grants to francophone economists, many of whom are in the early stages of their academic careers. The CODESRIA Economic Policies Network was established to support francophone economists in the early stages of their careers as lecturers in African universities. These economists, it was realized, were at a disadvantage in the sense that they had nothing in francophone Africa that was comparable to the AERC, which was providing support mainly to those who used English as their working language. The CODESRIA Small Grants for Thesis Writing are given to master's and doctoral students. Part of the grant goes toward purchasing recent, relevant literature. Research methodology workshops are organized periodically for cohorts of grantees in different

subregions. The Economic Policies Network supports research projects of junior faculty but also organizes workshops and training seminars for them.

Small grants programs such as these share a common desire to support a distressed generation based in higher education institutions that are themselves often in distress. More fundamentally, the programs contribute towards the reproduction of the research community by contributing to the training of younger generations of scholars. The ultimate solution, however, is of the strengthening of postgraduate programs of the African universities themselves. With additional resources, the regional networks and institutions could play much more significant roles in the regeneration of the universities, in strengthening the links between scholars of the region, and in strengthening communication between scholars from different regions.

We need to know more about this third generation in terms of its concerns, movements, membership networks, engagement in research issues and themes, and the paradigms it espouses. The implications of these changes in the demographic profile of the scholarly community for the universities and for social science teaching and research are quite serious. The implications will affect research priorities, training needs (capacity building), and policy. How are the universities responding to the changes? What happened to the first and second generations of scholars, and what are the intergenerational relationships? Is there significant intergenerational learning or transmission of knowledge? How does the combination of generation changes, dwindling resources, and paradigm shifts manifest itself in the social sciences?

These and many other questions come up regularly in discussions on graduate programs, grants, and fellowship schemes for postgraduate and postdoctoral scholars, and in methodology workshops and other research capacity building programs. In its report, the selection committee of the 1998 round of competition for CODESRIA's Small Grants for Thesis Writing observed that the range of topics was extremely broad, indicating both pluralism and dynamism in the social science research community. However, the primary concern of the applicants (418 in number) was with the "immediate and the empirical." Little attention was paid to literature and philosophy, "which are two disciplines that also give, and in pertinent ways, a key to the understanding and interpretation of the social world. Moreover, the richness of the research themes is in a total mismatch with the theoretical, methodological, and bibliographical poverty [of the dissertation projects presented]." The committee therefore urged CODESRIA to contribute to the dissemination of "theoretical and methodological innovations" (CODESRIA 1998: 4).

A meeting of representatives of the Rockefeller Foundation, representatives of African universities and research institutes, and selected conveners of

the North American African Development Dissertation Workshops, held in New York in May 1998, also made the following observation, which is quite similar to that made by the CODESRIA Small Grants selection committee:

In many African countries a dynamic new generation of broadly development-oriented young and would-be scholars is emerging relatively free of the earlier generation's focus on national independence, and/or Cold war issues (the generational shift). . . . Many African universities are increasingly able to do basic academic training, but there are an important set of research capacity development activities, which call for additional inputs, and organizational initiatives which often fall beyond the gaze of the donor community (research capacity development). At the heart of the research capacity development is a series of needs which turn broadly on the question of research METHODS and on the creation of inter-generational learning and research communities around thematic concerns (methodological and thematic research capacity), (CODESRIA 1998: 1–2)

In sum, after more than 40 years of postcolonial development, both the institutions and the scholars have become much broader and have reached higher levels of indigenization. They are rooted much more deeply in local realities than was the case at the outset.

Changes in the higher education and the broader research landscape are part and parcel of the more general transformation of the African socio-economic and political environments. The “business” of social science is, precisely, to read, name, and try to make sense of social realities as they change. Research priorities and themes have therefore been changing. However, the realities are also changing in the relative importance attached to social research in general, to each of the social science disciplines, and, within disciplines, to each branch. This reclassification has been taking place partly on the basis of the perceived relevance to national development priorities whose very definition has been changing with the shifts in development paradigms and partly on the market value of the disciplines and the branches within them. The market value is seen mainly in terms of the marketability of courses, job opportunities available to graduates in these disciplines, chances of getting donor funding, and possibilities for engaging in commissioned research and consultancy.

Private Sector Challenges

The proliferation of institutions is a response to the challenges of the day, and it provides opportunities for many people who are aspiring to a good tertiary education. For the private sector, which includes the not-for-profit sector, the

holders of certificates obtained from these private institutions form a much larger pool of potentially operational graduates from which to recruit. This section begins with a brief review of the development of the private side of the higher education sector in Africa and then reviews some of the problems associated with that proliferation for both the state and the private sector.

Private universities were an unknown phenomenon in most African countries until recently. Now, they have begun to appear in a number of countries. As we have seen, even in Nigeria the number of private universities is still very small. Five universities were established by missions and by some well-to-do and very enterprising (although sometimes allegedly corrupt) individuals.

In Senegal, as late as the early 1990s, there were only a few professional schools, such as the Ecole Pigier, that were mainly local branches of schools in France offering courses and two-year degrees in office management, "bureautique" and "secretariat." With the reform of the tertiary education sector, there were eight tertiary-level institutions in 1996. The number has almost doubled since then. The new institutions include two private universities, the Université du Sahel, established by a collective of university professors, and the Université Bourguiba, which was set up by a group of enterprising individuals, including a mathematics professor at Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar and a one-time government minister. There are also local campuses of North American universities, such as Suffolk University, a private school of journalism, several schools of management and business administration, and a plethora of two-year tertiary-level professional schools offering courses in informatics, nursing and other health-related professions, hotel work, tourism, communications and marketing, accountancy and commerce, insurance, etc.

A similar development occurred in Nigeria and in a number of other countries. Zimbabwe has eight universities and several other regional (such as SARIPS) and national institutions (Nhema 2000). Kenya and Tanzania each have numerous tertiary education institutions. Even in conflict-ridden Sierra Leone, the government plans to open two new universities (in addition to the already existing University of Sierra Leone, located in Freetown), and three polytechnics in the next two or three years.

In the case of Senegal, the proliferation followed the liberalization of the higher education sector in the early 1990s. Before the reforms, admission to the university was guaranteed to all Senegalese secondary school graduates. It no longer is. With the rise in the numbers of unemployed degree holders, the locally obtained university degree was thought to be of a lesser value. Instead, professional certificates and degrees that are said to be more practice-oriented were preferred. Here, as in Nigeria and elsewhere, the U.S.-type MBA has

become the most prestigious degree, one that almost guarantees its holder employment at a good salary. The Senegalese state also created a new, public university in the city of Saint-Louis in the northern part of the country. This university was designed to ease the pressure on Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar (UCAD), where the student population had reached unmanageable levels compared to the facilities available, and to find a way of addressing the high levels of politicization of the student body and faculty. Gaston Berger University (UGB) of Saint-Louis, as it is called, was therefore to be a fairly elitist development university. Success has so far been quite limited. The public universities have opened private centers for evening classes where fee-paying students, workers, and ordinary students needing extra classes (for instance, students expelled from the main university following a change in the rules on the number of repeats allowed) can acquire some rapid training (“formation accélérée”) and enroll for degree courses. This is one way of raising funds for the university and earning additional income for the faculty teaching in these centers and special programs.

In Nigeria, almost all the major universities opened satellite campuses in Lagos and in the other “viable” cities, as they call them. The lead in this approach was taken by the University of Lagos (UNILAG), which had a very business-minded vice chancellor. These satellite campuses offer degrees and certificate-granting programs at a relatively high price. This situation created so many problems that the Nigerian federal government recently decided to close all satellite campuses, after earlier attempts to restrict them to a radius of 200 kilometers from the main university failed.

In addition to the proliferation of private centers and institutions—some of which are creations of public universities—there are also a number of open universities, distance learning institutions, virtual universities, corporate universities, etc. While there are many benefits associated with an expanding and more vibrant private higher education sector, they are also accompanied by several problems.

The first problem is that the costs are often quite high, beyond what many would-be students can afford. In Nigeria, depending on the university offering the degree, a student who enrolls in an MBA program would pay at least 100,000 Nairas for the year. In U.S. dollars, this price is not much compared to what it would cost in the United States, but it is still too high for most Nigerian students.¹² Those enrolling for such courses are therefore from middle-class families or people who are already employed in banks, insurance companies, etc. Access to quality higher education for the large mass of students leaving high school every year is, therefore, still an issue.

Cost is not, however, the only issue. While authorities of the University of Sierra Leone were unable to raise student fees because of both government and student opposition to the idea, they have succeeded in getting the large numbers of secondary school students who fail their final exams to enroll in an access program especially designed for them, to improve their chance of obtaining admission to the university. The fees for participation in the access program are currently higher than the fees paid at the university. Another important problem is the poor quality of the training given in some of the new tertiary education institutions. There is a need for some regulation and closer monitoring of the curriculum and quality of the education given in these institutions (Nyamnjoh 2002). In Senegal, institutions are granted permission to operate and are recognized as degree-granting institutions by the Ministry of Higher Education after having functioned for two sessions. MBAs offered by satellite campuses of Nigerian universities could be obtained within one year, which is not possible in universities such as the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where it would take two to three years.

Related to the quality problems are those that of accreditation. Accreditation is one way to ensure minimum standards from new courses and new degree programs. Left to themselves, some of the new institutions might not be very rigorous about the standards and quality of the education they provide. Degree granting ought to be properly regulated. On the other hand, the rapid development of the Internet and the transformation of delivery modes and publishing outlets has, in some cases, taken academic and state authorities by surprise. This situation is even more critical when it comes to electronic journals. None of the electronic journals is yet accredited in South Africa.¹³ Similarly, there is a need for overall regulation of degree-granting institutions and peer review or other quality-control mechanisms for journals. Some of these things may be easier done at the global level, which is what led Mamphela Ramphele (2001) to point out the need for global credit standards.

Few of these new institutions have good Ph.D. programs and few engage in research. Yet without research, most universities run the risk of turning into “glorified secondary schools” (Mukuma 2001: 15). As Mamdani said:

Universities cannot function as government departments, just as they cannot function as businesses. It is the very fact that universities are not limited by short term considerations—as governments and businesses are, one to capture votes and the other to make profits—this unique freedom gives universities the capacity for a longer term orientation research. Any higher education [institution] worth the name has to involve [itself] in research. For society, research is an investment in the future. The single most important distinction between universities and

secondary schools, even technical colleges, is that only universities carry out research. The reward for research, and the measure of its ability, is not narrowly monetary. The real significance of research for society is that it expands our options and thereby secures us an independent future. This is why nowhere in the world is higher education a profitable enterprise, why nowhere is higher education possible without heavy social subsidy. (Quoted in Mukuma 2001: 15)

The new private institutions are therefore far from being in a position to replace the traditional universities as knowledge-producing institutions. Instead, the new institutions not only depend on traditional institutions for their teaching staff and for the development course content, but they also take time and human and intellectual resources away from the traditional institutions. In almost all of the recent studies on research in Africa (Aina 1998; Allen 1986; Kwesiga et al. 2001; Mushi et al. 2001), consultancy and various forms of private practice have been identified as major hindrances to research, teaching, and publishing in the universities.

The issue of graduate unemployment is also far from being resolved by the proliferation of private institutions awarding professional certificates. The problem is not always with the kind of disciplinary background or training acquired. When civil engineers, medical doctors, and accountants can remain unemployed for extended periods of time despite prevailing underdevelopment, poverty, and health problems, the issue is certainly not simply one of training. It may well be that the problem is partly in the ways that African developing economies are organized and with the absorptive capacity of the economy. The major challenge to the private sector is to increase the possibilities for employment and to enter into creative partnerships with the state and the civil sector in various areas of public interest.

Finally, as the situation in several countries shows, private sector-led tertiary education institutions are mainly money-making ventures. The private sector does not have to duplicate the efforts being made in the traditional institutions. Instead, it could support the traditional institutions in various ways and benefit both directly and indirectly from the services that the traditional institutions provide.

Conclusion

The traditional higher education institutions are still the main providers of higher education in Africa. Moreover, even in a relatively well-resourced country like South Africa, two thirds of all university resources come from the state. Even at of Makerere University in Uganda, which is often presented as a good ex-

ample of an institution that has successfully converted itself to good, business-like management practices, 60% of the funding still comes from the state. Private higher education institutions are gradually increasing in numbers. But in the most important centers of higher learning—Nigeria, South Africa, and Egypt—the three countries which together host more than half of the higher education institutions in Africa and account for most of the scientific production carried out on the continent, there are extremely few private universities. There is, therefore, still a great deal of public interest in higher education, and public support for higher education is still a necessity. Without it, a number of fundamental aspects of higher education will run the risk of withering away. One consequence of such a development would be the serious threat that it would pose to the existence of a strong, indigenous intelligentsia in Africa, one that can really think through the future of the continent.

Many of the new tertiary education institutions, especially the private ones, depend on the traditional institutions for teachers, teaching materials, and a number of other things. In this paper I have argued that, as a matter of fact, without the traditional higher education institutions, specifically the public university, many of the private institutions that exist in Africa today would not survive. For this reason, I think it would be unrealistic and actually quite risky to leave higher education entirely to the private sector. Instead, because of the social value of the university degree and the high demand for higher education, it is likely that more complementary relationships will develop between the private sector and the public universities.

But the links that exist between the institutions of the traditional model and those of the alternative models are many, and the flows are not entirely unidirectional—from the traditional to the new institutions. The new institutions have actually obliged the traditional ones to adapt and rationalize their methods and ways. Teachers remain in the public universities partly because they have possibilities for supplementing their incomes and because they can be confronted with intellectual challenges outside of the traditional academy through their involvement in regional networks and projects initiated by independent institutions.

We need, however, to recognize the limitations inherent in current private-sector initiatives in the higher education sector in Africa. These initiatives are often ad hoc, sporadic, and geared towards short-term gains with little regard for issues such as basic research, the long-term reproduction of the scholarly community, and academic freedom. The main challenges for higher education development in Africa are closely linked with the global and continental economic and social processes. Responses must therefore be seen in that context.

And both the traditional institutions and scholars have been very creative in responding to the challenges facing African higher education. The private sector has the potential of playing a significant complementary role to that of the state sector, but an appropriate regulatory framework is needed. There is now a consensus on the need for rational, democratic, and accountable management of higher education institutions, both public and private, both of which are working out ways of taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the IT revolution. If the South African experience is anything to go by, public institutions are not necessarily a handicap. The University of Pretoria is one of the few universities anywhere with a Department of Telematic Learning and Educational Innovation, established in 1997, and comparable to what in industry would be an R&D unit. The University of Cape Town has also been at the cutting edge in the use of new information and communications technologies, as well as in the development of academic programs of teaching and research. Of course, South Africa's historically disadvantaged (i.e., Black) higher education institutions are far from reaching such high levels of technological development; but here too, as in other parts of Africa, it cannot be said that the main problem is in their being traditional institutions. If anything, many innovations have taken place in traditional higher education institutions in the last 20 years or so (Ford Foundation 2001).

In many sub-Saharan Africa countries, therefore, higher education systems are made up of both traditional institutions using mixed modes of delivery and learning and new kinds of institutions and modes of delivery. Furthermore, both the traditional institutions and modes are actually in a constant state of "reinvention." The higher education and knowledge systems are, however, both still dominated by more traditional institutions and modes.

Finally, although both the traditional and the new institutions are challenged by the internationalization of higher education, it is in the public university that basic research is being taken more seriously. And it is here that concerns about issues of equity (including gender equity), social accountability, social relevance, and academic freedom are taken up with a significant degree of seriousness. It is also mainly in the public universities that one finds good Ph.D. programs. (Ph.D. programs exist in 82 of the 175 universities listed in the AAU survey of universities of sub-Saharan Africa.) A recent study on Ph.D. programs in the universities of sub-Saharan Africa (outside of South Africa) commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation identified "a strong consensus . . . as to which universities had historically been strong in the social sciences, arts and humanities. All nine universities which currently seemed the most promising in these fields" are also all public universities (Szanton & Manyika 2002: 5).¹⁴

There is, therefore, an extremely solid case for public and donor funding of higher education and research in Africa, precisely when the whole world now seems to recognize the fact that higher education is a vital factor for economic and social development under the conditions of globalization. The Internet has created unprecedented opportunities for the rapid diffusion of scientific knowledge, but it still matters where this knowledge is produced.

Notes

- 1 The author expresses appreciation to Nancy Ruther for her editorial comments, and to Yaw Nyarko, David Collis, Robert Evenson, Awa Ba, and Sarah Manyika for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.
- 2 The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (ninth edition, 1995) defines higher education as “education at university etc. especially to degree level” and it defines tertiary education as “education in a college or university, that follows secondary education.” In this paper, I therefore use the concepts interchangeably.
- 3 These include a CODESRIA (Council for the Development of Social Sciences in Africa) workshop on challenges facing African universities at the beginning of the 21st century and implications for CODESRIA (Dakar, Senegal, December 2000); a workshop on Knowledge Networks and the Universities in Africa; and a planning meeting to launch a research project on social science and higher education research in Africa, both of which were co-organized by the SSRC and the AAU (Accra, Ghana, February 2000 and June 2001); and an AAU planning meeting held in Accra in December 2001 about a SIDA/SAREC (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) inventory of the social sciences in Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe jointly carried out in 2000 by nationally mixed teams of scholars from the leading universities of these countries.
- 4 I use “postcolonial” here in a purely chronological sense, referring to the period following the end of colonialism.
- 5 Together with its polytechnics, Nigeria has about 60 higher education institutions (Amuwo, 2001).
- 6 Szanton & Manyika (2002). In the first quarter of 2002 following the publication of a government-commissioned report on higher education, there was a very heated debate in South Africa on the need for, and means of persuading, some of the universities and technikons to merge into more coherent and complementary bodies.
- 7 The Naira was then very strong—actually overvalued—and one Naira was exchanged for approximately two U.S. dollars. At this writing (October 2001), the rate is 120 Nairas to US\$1.00.
- 8 On the concept of the “public good” and its importance in the discussion on higher education transformation, the first issue of *Kagisano* (published by the Council on Higher Education, South Africa) in which the Singh and Jonathan articles appeared contains other relevant material: Higher Education Discussion Series, No. 1 (Sum-

mer 2001): “Re-inserting ‘the Public Good’ into Higher Education Transformation.”

- 9 These points were made by several professors teaching at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, to a U.N. University for Peace Consultative Mission to South Africa in early April 2002 in which I participated.
- 10 These figures were given to the UPEACE Consultative Mission to South Africa by Dr Hussain Solomon, Senior Researcher at the Africa Institute of South Africa and Associate Professor at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria, April 2002. There is no agreement as to how to define Internet users and access to the Internet. Should “users” include people who use only e-mail? Should it include people who send messages through others? Some define users only as people having accounts with service providers that do not include such online groups as Yahoo, Hotmail, Caramail, and many others. Yet with the spread of cybercenters (often called “cybercafés,” although they rarely have resemblance to a café), many users open accounts with these online providers and are omitted from surveys and censuses of Internet users. The actual numbers of users in Africa might therefore be much higher than the figures indicate. I am grateful to Jessica Davies of Georgetown University for drawing my attention to this fact.
- 11 I was also involved in exploring possibilities for launching a joint initiative between Yale University’s agrarian studies program and CODESRIA to promote agrarian studies in Africa, possibly with SARIPS in Zimbabwe, with whose director discussions were begun. Although the initiative is still to be launched, in 2002 the former director of SARIPS decided to move on the idea and established an African Agrarian Institute in Harare with a view to finding ways of bringing on board partners such as Yale and CODESRIA, as was originally planned. The idea of triangular partnerships involving institutions of the industrialized countries, a regional organization, and African universities may therefore be something to explore further.
- 12 This relatively low cost of the MBA—by international standards—was probably what prompted one of the UNILAG VCs to try and open a satellite campus in South Korea as well!
- 13 This information comes from Hussain Solomon, Senior Researcher at the Africa Institute of South Africa and Associate Professor at the University of Pretoria, April 2002.
- 14 The nine universities of SSA, outside of South Africa, are: Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar; the University of Ghana, Legon; Yaounde II in Cameroon; the University of Ibadan; and the University of Lagos in Nigeria; Makerere University in Uganda; the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania; Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique; and the University of Zimbabwe.

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