

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

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Introduction

Joseph Ki-Zerbo reminds us about the fact that well before the other continents, Africa (e.g. Egypt, the "Universities of Northern Sahel" etc.) was a producer of education and of teaching systems:

"It is forgotten, all too often, that Africa was the first continent to know literacy and to institute a school system. Thousands of years before the Greek letters alpha and beta, roots of the word alphabet, were invented, and before the use of the Latin word schola, from which the word school derives, the scribes of ancient Egypt wrote, read, administered, philosophized using papyrus. (Ki-Zerbo, 1990, p. 15)

Ki-Zerbo claims that Africa has now become a continent without a controlled system of collective self-perpetuation:

"Here the formal system of classroom education looks like a foreign cyst in the social body, a malignant tumour." (Ki-Zerbo, 1990, p. 12)

To me the great question is: How is it at all possible to reconstruct the curriculum of African schools, to root it in African culture without a great emphasis on indigenous research, preferably done by African scholars who are clearly African based in their outlook? How is it possible to develop an African counter-expertise without a strengthening of the African universities?

After having looked at the unequal distribution of resources in this world especially within science and technology and in the area of higher education we shall pay a visit to the policies of the World Bank when it comes to higher education especially in Africa. What has the Jomtien conference led to when it comes to higher education in Africa? We shall discuss the problems of overseas training and of North-South university cooperation, showing some examples of bad practice and some commendable examples. Towards the end of the paper we shall discuss what the role of the African university should be.

The uneven distribution of resources to higher education

The UNDP Human Development Report of 1994 reports the following distribution of income for the years 1960 and 1991

	1960	1991
The income of the 20% richest people in the world as percentage of total income.	70 %	85 %
The income of the 20% poorest people in the world as percentage of total income.	2,3 %	1,4 %

Most of the affluent who are becoming even richer live in the northern hemisphere, in the industrialized west. The gap between the industrialized countries and the least developed ones is becoming an abyss. In 1960 the wealthiest 20% of the world's populations was 30 times richer than the poorest 20%. Thirty years later, in 1990 it was 60 times richer.

As the UNDP report also indicates, the inequalities between the North and the South increased even more when it came to the development of

scientific capacity and technological development than when it came to income distribution. In less than ten years, the North's advantage in the number of scientists and technicians expanded by 60%. Investment in research and development is a key indicator for predicting the spectacular development of the central economies of the North, but it is also a key to predicting greater poverty for the people of the South. Between 1980 and 1990, the gap in research and development spending widened 170%. The United States, the European Union, Japan and the former Soviet-Union share 88% of the world's resources for research. The countries in Sub-Saharan Africa share less than 1% of the research and development-oriented scientists and engineers and about 0.2 of the global expenditure for such activities. (Barré and Papon 1993)

Of all World Bank projects in support of science and technology in higher education and in industry since 1970, no less than two-thirds were executed in the Asia/Pacific region. In terms of value more than 75% of the value of all Science and Technology projects went to Asia, and somewhat less than 5 % went to the African region. (Muskin,1992)

In only fifteen years, the differences in university enrolment levels doubled in favour of the developed world. (UNDP 1992) Berit Olsson (1995) in her paper on the power of knowledge claims that the most glaring inequalities are demonstrated in the opportunities for higher education. While the most advanced countries have more than 5 000 students per 100 000 inhabitants, the least fortunate ones educate less than 25. (UNESCO 1993). IDRC (International Development Research Centre) suggests that differences between nations in their capacity to generate and utilise knowledge will create a new "global apartheid." (IDRC 1994)

The attitude of the World Bank towards university education in the South.

More than twenty years ago, the World Bank (1974) in its *Education Sector Working Paper* began the process of emphasising the importance of primary and basic (including non-formal education) and urged the raising of the proportion of education lending to this sector (from 11 to 27%) and, in consequence, reducing the proportion going to higher education (from 40 to 30%) Although non-formal and adult education soon dropped from Bank priorities, it did prove possible over the next 20 years to raise dramatically the proportion of lending for basic education and to reduce higher education, as planned, to approximately 30 %. (King 1995)

The Education Sector Policy Paper at the beginning of the 1980s (World Bank 1980) was remarkable in that there was almost no more than a page or two of discussion on higher education in some 100 pages of text.

At a meeting with African vice-chancellors in Harare in 1986, the World Bank argued that higher education in Africa was a luxury: that most African countries were better off closing universities at home and training graduates over-seas. Recognising that its call for a closure of universities was politically unsustainable, the Bank subsequently modified its agenda, calling for universities in Africa to be trimmed and restructured to produce only those skills which the market demands. Such was its agenda for university restructuring for instance in Nigeria in the late 1980s. (Mamdani,1993)

The 1988 paper on *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: policies for adjustment, revitalization and expansion*. (here called ESSA)

We have elsewhere made an analysis of the ESSA paper. (Brock-Utne

1993) We shall here only mention briefly the attitude towards higher education in Africa which comes across in this paper. It should be remembered that in 1983 tertiary institutions in Africa trained one person at that level for each 5 800 inhabitants (World Bank 1988: 96) compared to for instance one person for each 100 inhabitants in a country like Norway.

Even though African policy-makers at earlier meetings about World Bank policies for the educational sector had strongly opposed the suggestion of a stagnation in enrolments in higher education, this suggestion is advanced over again in the ESSA paper:

"To meet minimally acceptable targets for coverage and quality of lower levels of education in most countries, as a general rule the tertiary sub sector's share of stagnant real public education expenditures cannot expand further, and in some cases may have to contract. Some combination of efficiency improvements, increased private contribution to costs, and constrained growth of - in some countries and fields, outright cutback in - production of graduates must be sought." (World Bank 1988: 95)

The fields which have been singled out for cut-backs are the arts and humanities. The advice to cut down on higher education in Africa will increase the dependency of Africa for studies over-seas and for filling their institutes of higher learning with expatriates and with people who have been trained mainly over-seas and have been given, mostly western, in any case non-African concepts, ideas, outlooks and research methodologies.

The Education for All conference

The thinking of the World Bank has also been quite instrumental in shaping the conference "Education for All" which took place in Jomtien, Thailand from the 5th to the 9th of March 1990 and was co-sponsored by the World Bank, UNESCO, UNDP and UNICEF.

At the Jomtien conference a whole series of countries were lobbying for more explicit safeguards for higher education, research and access to high technology. The thrust of this concern was from Latin America with other signatories coming from Africa and Asia, the Caribbean and Europe. Norrag News (June 1990,p.6) claims that IDRC was also instrumental in successfully inserting a parallel recommendation which argued that:

"sound basic education is fundamental to the strengthening of higher levels of education and of scientific and technological literacy and capacity and thus to self-reliant development" (WDEFA, preamble, p.3)

Once the spirit of the Latin American resolution had also been accepted, there was secured a dual justification of the need for higher education in relation to basic education:

"Societies should also insure a strong intellectual and scientific environment for basic education. This implies improving higher education and developing scientific research. Close contact with contemporary technological and scientific knowledge should be possible at every level of education." (Article 8, point 2 p.8 in the World Declaration on Education for All)

In an evaluation of the outcomes of the EFA conference from an African perspective, the programme specialist in education and planning in UNESCO's regional office in Dakar, Senegal Aimé Damiba (1991) concludes:

"We must avoid the danger of limiting ourselves to basic education and neglecting high level manpower training and research. It is not possible to solve the problems of Education for All without a national pool of expertise and without an indigenous capacity for research." (Damiba, 1991, p.11)

Yet third world countries seem to interpret the results from the Jomtien conference as a wish from the donor community to limit their renewed effort within the education sector to basic education and telling developing countries to do the same. As we shall see their interpretation seems unfortunately to be correct.

The 1994 World Bank paper: "Higher Education: The Lessons of Experience"

There is considerable overlap between the ESSA paper from 1988 and the 1994 World Bank paper: *"Higher Education: The Lessons of Experience"* in the treatment of the reasons for the high costs and in the rationales for diversifying the funding and finance. The proposed stagnation of higher education which can be found in the ESSA paper is also a prominent feature of the Higher Education paper of 1994. The safeguards that people from the South thought they had managed to get into the Jomtien declaration do not seem to have had any effect on World Bank thinking. Two of the more obvious differences between the ESSA paper and the Higher Education paper are associated with the role of the private sector and the role of non-university institutions.

In the ESSA study the focus of the treatment of higher education was principally on the public university sector whereas in 1994 one of the main themes was that there should be diversification of higher education with attention to the whole range of non-university institutions.

One might have hoped that the World Bank higher education paper would have as its primary purpose to defend the higher education sector against other priorities, and to argue its relevance among and support of other sub-sectors of education. It might have been expected to underline the critical role of higher education in society for those overall development goals which are increasingly becoming prevalent amongst multilateral and bilateral donors: sustainable economic and environmental development, good governance and poverty reduction. (Buchert 1995:10)

Lene Buchert (1995) mentions that if these expectations should have been fulfilled the arguments in the document would have centred on the importance of both traditional and modern goals of education.

- The paper would in that case have focused on higher education as a knowledge producer
- and as a value and culture transmitter
- in addition to its more utilitarian functions for industry and business, developing the higher education sector as a means of local capacity-building.

Instead, the lens through which higher education is seen in the Bank's document is primarily an economic one. Recommended solutions are those which can simultaneously reduce costs and increase access specifically to those areas of education which support the utilitarian purposes of the university. These are the main policy prescriptions round which the Higher Education paper (World Bank 1994) is centred:

- *a redefined role for the state in higher education*

Here the paper is giving a predominant role to the market in the relationship with the state - ignoring that in most African contexts there is no local industrial dominance and no powerful private sector with which the state can share the responsibility for higher education. In an article on redefining the role of government in higher education Keith Watson (1995) demonstrates that in many of the key country cases e.g. OECD countries and NICs the state has maintained an interventionist role in the higher education sector.

- *institutional differentiation*
Here the World Bank gives a predominant role to the private sector in the relationship with higher education institutions.
- *diversification of funding*
This means cost-sharing measures including user fees, university partnership with business - privatisation and diversification of the higher education system. Christopher Colclough (1995a) shows that in many countries the above-mentioned policies may not prove to be as successful now as they might have been ten years earlier. This he claims is, in part, because the aggregate enrolment response to user charges will depend upon the extent to which the net private returns (both monetary and non-monetary) continue to outweigh those from alternative dispositions of savings and student time. The assumption made by most advocates of user charges at tertiary level is that these returns would remain high enough, even after the imposition of fees for higher education, to remain a rational personal investment.

Yet, as pointed out by Colclough, most of the evidence upon which this assumption is based uses earnings data from the 1960s and 1970s, and does not accommodate the strong reductions in real earnings and in earnings differentials between university graduates and other workers, which have been a characteristic of the 1980s in many developing countries. For example, in a sample of eight African countries, the average differential in starting salaries between university graduates and secondary school leavers was reduced by 32 per cent between 1975 and the late 1980s. Thus the existing rate-of-return studies for Sub-Saharan Africa - upon which strong proposals for cost recovery continue to be based (World Bank 1988:72; 79-80) - may substantially over-estimate present private returns, and may no longer provide an accurate guide to the magnitude of enrolment response to the introduction of user charges. Given the very widespread economic difficulties experienced in developing countries during the last decade, and the changes in real earnings which adjustment policies have often implied, conclusions which presuppose that relative prices have remained unchanged over that period are a fragile foundation upon which to base changes to current economic policy.

- *policy attention to quality, responsiveness and equity.*
African countries have to prove themselves worthy of Bank support for higher education and this worthiness is measured by results in terms of equity and quality at the primary and secondary levels - this argument ignores the importance of a well-functioning higher education system in efforts to achieve quality at other sub-sectoral levels. Kenneth King (1995) in his criticism of the World Bank paper on higher education finds that the paper announces a new conditionality: Higher education only

after adequate provision of primary and secondary education. The likelihood may be that developing countries are increasingly marginalised in the globalisation process and as partners in the development of knowledge.

Colclough (1995b) points to the need for increased support rather than reduction in the expenditures for higher education in many countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Colclough writes about the need for redistribution of government support among different sectors, especially from defence to the social sectors.

The purpose of international aid should be the creation of equal access to knowledge of science and technology in order to decrease or close the development gap between developed and developing countries. The stated World Bank recommendations are neglecting this concern.

The World Bank paper shows a lack of understanding of the "value" of higher education. Kenneth King puts it this way:

"A steadfast concern with the establishment of academic communities, research traditions and scholarly values" is hard to find (King, 1995:36)

The WB paper notes that most future expansion will be in short cycle and continuing education programmes, in open universities, in diploma and certificate courses - and of course in new forms of private higher education. (WB 1994:91)

The effects on higher education of a concentration of resources on basic education.

A Tanzanian colleague wrote to me recently.:

"My own view is that education for all is fine as a goal. Who is against education for all? All wish to achieve that. But the problem is **how** to achieve it? What is the opportunity cost of achieving it? Reduced expenditure on higher education?"

My colleague voices the opinion held by most African statesmen and educationists **before** the Jomtien conference. They were afraid that the cry for basic education would not mean that more money would be coming to the education sector for instance through a transfer from military to educational expenditure as suggested in article 9 of the WDEFA, but would rather mean that scarce resources would now be shifted from higher education to basic education.

Knowing the attitude of the World Bank to higher education in Africa there is certainly reason to fear that the renewed emphasis on basic education will indeed lead to a further starvation of higher education and intellectual life in Africa. Studies after the Jomtien conference have shown that the focus of education aid amongst many multilateral and bilateral donor agencies is increasingly shifting to the basic education level. Lene Buchert (1995) shows that even agencies, which had generally allocated by far the larger proportion of their bilateral education assistance to the higher education sub-sector now have adopted policies in favour of the basic education level. This includes e.g. the Italian Development Cooperation, DGIS, ODA and the French Ministry of Development Cooperation. The increase in resource allocation towards basic education is often clearly indicated by the donor agencies as being undertaken at the expense of higher education.

But African educational planners try their best to safeguard the rights of their people to higher education. When I, in the spring of

1992, interviewed Tanzanian educators and officials in the educational task force which had been set up after the Jomtien conference, one of them told me:

"Instead of limiting ourselves to basic education, which was a wish from the Jomtien conference, we in Tanzania wanted to look at the whole educational sector. Each country after the Bangkok conference was to set up a committee to work with the implementations of the conference. We made this modification that we included other levels than basic education."

Universities and institutes of higher learning in Africa are of the greatest importance if Africa shall develop its own counter-expertise capable of evaluating and criticizing aid packages being offered and capable of building their own science and technology using local sources and based on local traditions. Research going on in the institutions of higher learning should also be of an empowering kind concentrating on the rewriting of history from an African perspective and building on indigenous knowledge. We shall return to a discussion of the content of higher education in Africa towards the end of the paper.

Let us first turn to the solution African university people are forced to use to meet the present crises. They feel compelled to seek donor support for a department, a faculty, a research institute. The support could in theory come as a grant that the universities themselves could use as they wanted. This is, however, seldom the case. The support normally comes in the form of link arrangements between Universities in the North and in the South. "Experts" from the North are normally part of the link phenomenon. So are books written in the North, computers from the North and scholarships for Master and Ph.d. students to go to the North. There are no provisions for students from the North to study in the South or for professors in the South to be Visiting Professors teaching in the North. Don't we have anything to learn from the South?

In search of the missing link - the linkage phenomenon in the University system.

I shall like to start a discussion of the linkage phenomenon in the African university system with a quote from an editorial in the Newsletter from the Academic Staff Assembly at the University of Dar es Salaam. (UDASA,1990,p.1):

"The situation at the University of Dar es Salaam is a microcosm of that in the nation as a whole. Here, in midst of filthy toilets and classrooms with broken windows and furniture thrives the LINK phenomenon. Virtually every department, under the threat of material and intellectual starvation, has been forced to establish links with one or more institutions, mostly from the West. We depend on the links for the training of our junior staff, for teaching material and equipment and a host of other things. The link agreements are, almost without exception, as unequal as would be expected. This is despite some efforts to include clauses suggesting reciprocity... What is primarily at stake is that as we lose confidence in our own ability to sustain our education system we shall also have to abandon the pretence of determining our educational future"

In the same Newsletter the historian A.Sheriff writes about the way the once proud academic community of the University of Dar es Salaam

"has been brought to its knees, begging from donors and the ubiquitous "Links" merely to keep on breathing." (Sheriff,1990,p.2)

In 1990 the university teacher Karim F.Hirji came back to the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Dar es Salaam after eight years of studying and working abroad. In a heartfelt article about his meeting with the LINK phenomenon he writes:

"As one goes around the Faculty of Medicine, one wonders whether, after a hundred years after Karl Peters landed here, a second partition of Africa is in progress or not. The Dental School seems to be run by the Finnish, the AIDS research program by the Swedes, community health programs by the Germans, with the British, Italian, Danish all having their own corners." (Hirji,1990,p.23)

Karim F.Hirji writes that he is definitely in favour of international exchange. That such exchange should be cultivated in any university. "However when such exchanges are solely conducted in the framework of a donor-recipient relation, what is there to guarantee that they are conducted on the basis of academic equality and mutual respect?", he asks. (Hirji,1990,p.23)

Thandika Mkandawire (1990,p.26) sees the disintegration of the research infrastructure as the most strikingly visible feature of the crisis of social sciences in Africa. Libraries are, as a result of the "Book Hunger" collapsing, means for travel to carry out field research hardly exists and when they do exist, they are linked to some short time consultancy work for government or external agency. The transnational firms that have hitherto dominated book publication in Africa are pulling out of Africa either because of foreign exchange constraints or radically reduced domestic markets as a result of austerity packages imposed on educational institutions or fear of political reprisals for publication of books that are controversial. There is a high mortality rate of journals. Books originating in the developing countries, especially in Africa, are highly underrepresented in the world to-day. According to the 1988 UNESCO's Statistical Yearbook Norway (with 4 million inhabitants) in the years 1984 to 1986 produced 3031 new titles which was greater than the number of book titles produced in Nigeria (1260), Tanzania (166), Zimbabwe (157), Mozambique (66), Ethiopia (227), Angola (14), Mali (160), Madagascar, (321), Gambia, (72) and Malawi (75) put together in the same years.

Mkandawire in his article on the "African Social Science Research Environment" claims that national priorities within research and education are vanishing all over Africa.

"In more recent years, with the decline in "national planning", the triumph of the market, the preponderance of foreign institutions in policy-making (through so-called "policy dialogues") any pretension to national priorities providing guidelines to research has simply vanished. Where national research councils still exist the statement of priorities is never more than a wishful declaration of intent. One may note, parenthetically, the irony in the fact that at the time when most African governments insisted on their national priorities there were few indigenous social scientists and most of the experts were expatriates who were not bound by national priorities. Now that Africa has large numbers of social scientists, African governments have lost a significant degree of autonomy and in one way or other are pursuing objectives imposed by external financial

institutions. (Mkandawire,1990,p.28)

Is it at all possible to establish a North-South cooperation in the university sector of an empowering kind?

To establish a North-South cooperation in the university sector which is truly symmetrical must be regarded as utopian given the unequal distribution of resources in this world. The mere fact that the one party is giving the money and is a "donor" while the other party receives the money and is a "recipient" is a disempowering and asymmetrical relationship.

Who is an expert and on what?

The so-called "experts"¹ and university people from the North go to Africa to teach, to "transfer" knowledge. In reality we may have more to learn from them than they have from us. The fact that we are "experts" in our own countries for instance in competitive sports of a western kind, women's law in Norway, aids-prevention in the North, commercial forestry or fishery in the North Sea does not make us experts on the use of the body in Africa, women's law in Africa, the spreading of aids in Africa, sexual norms among various African groups, African aggro-forestry or tropical multi-species fishery in shallow waters.

Within tertiary education Norway took the initiative to the starting up of diploma courses in women's law in universities in East Africa. It is important to note that the courses were not started as a result of requests from institutions outside, but as an initiative from NORAD itself. At the time of the first review of the course four courses had been conducted, the three first ones took place at the University of Oslo (UoO) and the fourth one at the Institute for Private Law, the University of Zimbabwe (UoZ). Participants came from Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. An evaluation of these courses concluded:

"The Institute of Women's Law in Oslo seems to have over-played their role in terms of administrative and professional contribution to the implementation of the course. They seem to have disregarded, perhaps because of time constraints, the point of views of partners at the UoZ who at times felt that their role was minimized to being host for the Norwegian "directors". Clearly, also selection of candidates and the course content were taken out of the hands of the UoZ.

..Many participants question the relevance of the Norwegian approaches in various lectures. It appears that there were too many Norwegian lecturers with rather limited competence in the African women's living conditions and reality...In the future concerted efforts must be made to develop a course content taking the perspective of African women as a starting point."
(Hyden, Kazembe, Lexow, Wirak, 1991, p.VIII.)

The review mission quotes African researchers who maintain that there are difficulties regarding the application in an African context of feminist jurisprudence developed in Norway. They point to historical, cultural, social and legal differences and the fact that in Africa the cultures and societies are deeply gender rooted. They maintain that

¹ The Tanzanians have the following interesting way of describing an "expert": "Mtaalam ni mtu ambaye anakuja nyumbani kwako na kuazimba saa yako na kukuambia ni saa ngapi." (translated into English: an expert is a person who comes to your house and asks you to borrow your watch whereafter he tells you what time it is)

the western legal thinking of equality between men and women is perhaps not the most relevant given the fact that the position of an African woman is relational in terms of her position in the extended family and kinship system rather than individually based as in Europe. Furthermore, the dual system of customary and common law which often coexist in many African countries, makes matter even more complex than in Norway.

The review mission cites the report of Mary Maboreke - the diploma course leader and Lecturer at the Department of Private Law at the University of Zimbabwe. She states that increasingly, both in methodology lectures as well as in dealing with substantive topics discussions tended to turn more and more towards customary law to try to identify aspects which could be used as bases for solutions which are both native/indigenous and appropriate to Africa as people felt that perhaps they should look "inward" for customary solutions for African problems rather looking "externally" for imported solutions in general law or other importations from western countries.

Maboreke illustrates this by looking at the way battered wives are sheltered in western and African societies. In the African tradition, she claims, a woman who is beaten up by her husband could always find sanctuary with one of the relatives either on her own or her husband's side, thus leaving the problem "a family matter", which is all important in African tradition. The western form of "outside intervention" without first exhaustion of the process of family dispute resolution is foreign to African thinking.

Another African participant, Janet W.Kabeberi-Macharia, a Lecturer of Law at the University of Nairobi who was a guest lecturer at the diploma course in 1990 states:

"So far the subjects/topics have been centered on a comparison between the Norwegian perspective and the African perspective. If we continue teaching women's law, using the above comparisons, there is a danger of regarding the Norwegian perspective as being the ultimate goal for "African" women's law. It is high time that this scope was expanded to include other perspectives from other countries. **However, what is most important is the development of an African perspective on women's law, centred on the need of African women and their experiences.**" (taken from Hyden, Kazembe, Lexow, Wirak1991,p.30)

One would think that the differences between a Norwegian perspective on women's law and an African one would make it interesting for Norwegian lawyers to come to Africa to learn about African law, to study the fascinating clashes between traditional law and codified law so well described for instance by Rwezaura (1985). The danger that Norwegian academics will be cultural imperialists is clearly there if we come with the attitude that we are the teachers, the ones who know. We are there to depart our knowledge, to enlighten and to inform - not to learn.

Institution building - whose institutions are being built?

In an evaluation of the Diploma/M.phil. course in Fisheries Biology and Fisheries Management conducted at the University of Bergen for candidates from developing countries it was concluded:

"The degree to which the course has assisted in institution building in the recipient countries is difficult to assess. Very little of the total course budget has been spent outside Norway and it is far more obvious that the course has led to institution

building in Norway than in the home countries of the participants." (Brock-Utne and Gislason 1993:35)

The elite trained at universities in the North

Dube (1976,p.350) writes about the native political elite in India, mostly Western-educated and Western-oriented who after Independence started to lead a life-style mimicking the West. And when it came to curricula, they did nothing to change them. He looks at the teaching of Education in higher places of learning and claims that dated philosophies of education - absorbed by the educational elite some decades back in high prestige centres of learning abroad continued to guide the educational system. Dube took a closer look at some of the textbooks that discuss the philosophical and social foundations of education. He found that

"as much as two-thirds of their content is devoted to expounding a liberal philosophy of education developed in the West three to five decades back - approaches that were valid for their time and social milieu - with little or very cursory discussion of changes in the thinking and practice of the countries in which these concepts originated. The remaining one third is often a curious amalgam. As a concession to nostalgia for the country's past, there is often a brief treatment of its "native" philosophy of education. There are some passing references to new international thinking such as UNESCO inspired ideas, and also the inevitable but invariably superficial discussion of Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire and others. What is almost missing is a critical and penetrating discussion of the relevance of these theories to the contemporary reality of the Third World and to the specific needs of different countries within it...Decision-makers in the field of education, with their conditioned minds, are prisoners of the pattern founded on obsolete ideas that held good in a colonial setting but are unsuited to the new ethos." (Dube,1976,p.351)

But there are success stories

In an interesting criticism of the recent Norwegian White paper on North/South policy the Indian researcher Sanjit Bunker Roy, Director of the Society for Work and Resources Centre in Tilonia lists some Priority Areas for Norwegian South/North Policy in Sustainable Development. We shall here pick out the priority areas he mentions pertaining to education:

- * Stop sending "experts" to the South and wasting resources. Instead the strategy should be to build local capacity. It should not be seen as an opportunity to provide jobs to Norwegians in the South. This is not "untied" aid.
- * Put more time and energy into developing people to people projects and exchanges.
- * Identify successes in approaches, methods, and implementation as a result of development aid that could be duplicated elsewhere in other countries in the South.
- * Promote low-cost, community based innovations
- * Stop training engineers, doctors, and professionals in Norway. They become misfits in their own country.
- * Top priority should be given to strengthening indigenous local institutions" (Roy 1993:10)

A programme which to me seems to combine several of these priority areas is the ALLEX programme which is a joint project of the universities of Zimbabwe, Gothenburg and Oslo to provide a range of monolingual dictionaries for the local languages in Zimbabwe, the chief of which are Shona and Ndebele. The project is a major step in upgrading some African languages to the benefit of the local people. The work is done by Zimbabweans who are native speakers of the languages in question. Financial aid is given through SIDA and NORAD (via NUFU - the organization for development aid through university cooperation). The Swedish and Norwegian lexicographers help with the computerization and share their experiences from working with Swedish and Norwegian dictionaries. They are taught about structures in African languages they did not know before and about meanings of different words rooted in a different cultural setting. The Zimbabweans engaged in this project claim that they really get a "help to self-help" and that in an area of the greatest importance for the masses of Africans.

A NORAD project which to me also seems to combine several of these priority areas in a successful way is the project with the aim to build up a Department of animal science and production at the University of Sokoine in Tanzania. Here NORAD has been successful in building local capacity. A Master of science course targeted at this department was first built up at Ås College of Agriculture in Norway but with the clear intention from the start that the course would after a few years be transferred to the University of Sokoine. Here the numbers of students increased and the curriculum was partly indiginized. The staff morale and performance of this department is high. Hardly any of the staff members had left their position in the Department when the Department was under review in 1992. (Brock-Utne, Chichaibelu, Kauzeni, Wiktorsson 1992) That project has been a success and the approach, methods, and implementation could be duplicated elsewhere in other countries in the South.

The German Foundation for Development (DSE - Deutsche Stiftung für Entwicklung) has embarked on an interesting project building research capacity within educational research in the eastern and southern African region. The project is enabling African educational researchers to meet, build networks and exchange information. With a little seed money the project enables African educational researchers to come up with some pieces of original research from their own societies using qualitative methods. Too often African academics are contracted by donors to conduct research on topics and issues that are not relevant for the development needs of the country or for the restoration of African culture and intellectual pride.

The link that is really missing

I am here asking the same question as Xabier Gorostiaga, Rector of the Central American University (UCA), Managua, Nicaragua is asking when analyzing the situation of Latin American universities: What then, does it mean to train "successful" professionals in this sea of poverty? Does an institution that does not confront the injustice surrounding it, that does not question the crisis of a civilization that is ever less universalizable to the great majorities of the world, merit the name "university"? Would not such an institution be simply one more element that reproduces this unequal system? (Gorostiaga 1993:29) He further asks if a university can be called successful if it churns out professionals unable to contribute to creating appropriate science and technology that are needed so that the countries of the South do not retreat even further from international competition?

"A university transformation that does not deal with the challenge of our growing scientific and technological distance from the North will be a project that condemns an ever greater percentage of our population to poverty." (Gorostiaga 1993:30)

The link that is really missing in most of the universities in the South is the link between the academia and the ordinary people. Values and knowledge creation, particularly through independent and basic research, are critically important in order to develop the African continent as a creator of science and technology and not simply a consumer of imported versions. This knowledge creation has to be one produced together with the local people. Examples of the missing link between local know-how and university know-how can be found in most departments in all of the universities in Africa. The university know-how has come about through studying texts which are relevant in the North but not in the South. Xabier Gorostiaga (1993) writes about professors of business administration in the South who cannot research big businesses of 20 workers because such businesses do not use the sophisticated accounting systems that they studied in the texts and which are used by only a small minority of factories in the South. In countries where the immense majority of farms belong to small and medium-sized growers, some professors of agricultural administration are only comfortable with the business and state administration schemes that they know from the Harvard manuals. The missing link is between the macro (national alternatives) and the micro (local experiences).

There is a lack of what Gorostiaga calls "people-bridges" capable of creating communication links among different local experiences, of promoting experimentation among them or of pushing viable national programs based on their successes.

This vacuum between the macro and the micro subverts the efforts of people from the South to find an alternative national development model. Gorostiaga argues for a transformation of the universities of the South to include local knowledge. The most common problems of the South can only be understood, he argues, by analyzing local experiences and the typical businesses of the South. The universities of the South have to take up this challenge. This is impossible to do without indigenous research and people being trained for the problems of the South, preferably in the South.

"The universality of values"

There is reason to be beware of the tendency of the West to claim universality for values that are particular to western history and culture. Yash Tandon (1995), former minister in Uganda, now living in Zimbabwe, in a recent article criticizes the way the concept human rights has come to mean civil rights embedded in western liberal and individual expression. To create intercultural awareness, we need to acknowledge that the universality of values should not be taken for granted. Yash Tandon writes about the tendency of the West to claim a universality for their definition of human rights and worse applying them as conditionalities for aid. In doing so

"the West commits the classic error of transposing its values on weaker populations who pretend to share those values for the sake of aid or development assistance." (Tandon 1995:11)

It is not so easy for us who live in the affluent West to start questioning our own values, our own behaviour and to approach the culture of other people with an open mind and a willingness to learn from them. How much are men willing to listen to and learn from women? How much are we in the West willing to listen to the indigenous peoples of this world?

"Omission and silence are strategies of oppression as much as active oppression, as well the feminist movement has shown us."
(Synott 1994:75)

In his article on the Australian aboriginal constructions of humans, society and nature John P.Synott (1994) explains the Tjukurppa - the holistic knowledge system of the Australian Aboriginal people. He shows how the indigenous people of the world, whose societies the West continues to oppress and destroy, are struggling to preserve and assert the very values and forms of social organization which peace educators are trying to promote.

The World Bank paper on Higher Education shows a lack of understanding for the local context and disregard for the cultural dimension - as pointed out by Cheng (1995) in the case of China.

African methods of conflict resolution

It is important that African peace educators do not derive their theories mostly from Western peace educators but search in their own heritage for an African way to deal with conflicts. The African Association for Literacy and Adult Education, which is a pan-African association, has outlined a three year research project in peace education. Among the main objectives we find the following:

- To research into the African concepts and terms of conflict, as well as into African methods, techniques and processes of conflict prevention, management and resolution.
- To establish and articulate a philosophy, principles and world outlook which underline African concepts of conflict, conflict prevention, management and resolution.
- To promote and generate public interest in African concepts of conflict, and methods, techniques and processes of conflict prevention, management, and resolution as a resource for managing and solving contemporary conflicts. (AALAE 1994:19)

To me the great question is: How is it at all possible to reconstruct the curriculum of African schools, to root it in African culture without a great emphasis on indigenous research, preferably done by African scholars who are clearly African based in their outlook?

In an article on the teaching of philosophy in African universities the African philosopher Kwasi Wiredu laments:

"An African may learn philosophy in a Western institution of higher learning abroad or at home and become extremely adroit in philosophical disputation; he may even be able to make original contributions in some branch of philosophy. The fact remains that he would be engaged in Western, not African philosophy. Surprisingly, many Africans accept this; they have even seemed to take it as a matter of course..The usual practice seems to reserve all references to African conceptions to classes on African philosophy. As far as the main branches of philosophy are concerned, African philosophical ideas might just as well be non-existent. This trend, I suggest, ought to be reversed. (Wiredu, 1984, pp.31-32)

Archie Mafeje (1992) writing on the indigenisation of intellectual discourse in Africa reminds African intellectuals of the guiding principle in Socratic thought: "know thyself".

Looking at African philosophical thought he finds grounds for a new

reconstruction and self-realisation. He sees that unwritten accounts transmitted in stories, legends, myths, etc and reflecting in various ways African philosophical thought are sources of high significance and of authenticity.

For Africa to find her way out of the abyss in which she finds herself an alternative national development model is needed. This model is not likely to be found unless the African universities are strengthened and transformed. The transformation would have to do with a strengthening of indigenous research based on local experience.

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