

# The University in Africa

List of Contributors.....	2
Martin Hall: The University in Africa - Overview .....	3
Calestous Juma: We need to reinvent the African university .....	27
Paul Zeleza: Beyond Afropessimism.....	30
Mongomme Alpheus Masoga: Challenges of African Indigenous Knowledge .....	38
Positions.....	62
Geri Augusto.....	62
Melvin Ayogu .....	65
Jane Bennett.....	69
Anthony Bogues.....	71
Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan .....	74
Brenda Cooper .....	76
Natasha Distiller.....	79
Elom Dovlu.....	82
John Higgins .....	86
Dan Izevbaye .....	88
Samuel O King.....	91
Alison Emslie Lewis.....	94
Mbulungeni Madiba.....	96
Bella Mukonyora .....	98
Thandabantu Nhlapo.....	101
Lungisile Ntsebeza.....	103
Sam Radithalo.....	106
Maano Ramutsindela .....	108
Alinah K Segobye .....	110
Crain Soudien.....	113
Ibrahima Thiaw .....	116
Nicolas Vigaud.....	119
Vanessa Watson.....	122
Nana Wilson-Tagoe .....	124
References.....	127
The University in Africa – the Debate.....	129
Johan Muller: The University in Africa - an Endnote .....	135

## List of Contributors

Geri Augusto	Independent Scholar and Educational Consultant	USA
Melvin Ayogu	Dean of Commerce, UCT	South Africa
Jane Bennett	Africa Gender Institute, UCT	South Africa
Anthony Bogues	Africana Studies Department, Brown University	USA
Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan	Department of Zoology, UCT	South Africa
Brenda Cooper	Centre for African Studies, UCT	South Africa
Natasha Distiller	English Language and Literatures, UCT	South Africa
Elom Dovlo	University of Ghana	Ghana
Martin Hall	Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Cape Town	South Africa
Carolyn Hamilton	University of the Witwatersrand	South Africa
John Higgins	English Language and Literatures, UCT	South Africa
Dan Izevbye	Department of Human Communications Bowen University	Nigeria
Calestous Juma	Harvard University	USA
Samuel King	Student, UCT	South Africa
Alison Emslie Lewis	Chemical Engineering, UCT	South Africa
Mbulungeni Madiba	Centre for Higher Education Development, UCT	South Africa
Mogomme Masoga	CRL Rights Commission	South Africa
Bella Mukonyora	Department of Philosophy and Religion Western Kentucky University	USA
Joe Muller	Deputy Dean, Faculty of Humanities, UCT	South Africa
Thandabantu Nhlapo	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, UCT	South Africa
Lungisile Ntsebeza	Sociology, UCT	South Africa
Sam Raditlhalo	English Language and Literature, UCT	South Africa
Maano Ramutsindela	Environmental and Geographical Sciences, UCT	South Africa
Alinah K. Segobye	History Department, University of Botswana	Botswana
Crain Soudien	School of Education, UCT	South Africa
Ibrahima Thiaw	Laboratoire de Pré-Protohistoire, University of Cheika Anta Diop, Dakar	Senegal
Nicolas Vigaud	Student, UCT	South Africa
Nan Warner	International Academic Programmes Office, UCT	South Africa
Vanessa Watson	Engineering and the Built Environment, UCT	South Africa
Nana Wilson-Tagoe	Department of the Languages and Cultures of Africa, School of Oriental and African Studies	UK
Paul Tiyambe Zeleza	African American Studies, University of Illinois	USA

:  
:

## **Martin Hall: The University in Africa - Overview**

### **Stages of Transformation**

A key stage in the path of transformation is a broadly-founded reconsideration of the core purposes of the university – the generation of new knowledge through scholarship and research, and the transmission of such knowledge through teaching and learning, and through the network of relationships that connect the university with wider society. The project reported here contributes to this reconceptualization by identifying and setting out some of the key issues for the university in Africa today.

While many universities face challenges of adjustment to a changing world, and these challenges are often acute in Africa, the transformation agenda for universities in South Africa has particular characteristics that are part of the broader processes of social and economic reconstruction after apartheid. While the considerations that are set out here seek to see South African higher education in the context of the continent, they are also filtered through a national lens, and oriented to a University of Cape Town perspective. Our purpose in this project was primarily institutional, and this report does not have pretensions of an agenda for Higher Education in Africa, or for that matter in South Africa. Consequently, we were particularly fortunate in the generosity of colleagues from Zimbabwe, Botswana, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, the West Indies, the United Kingdom and the USA who shared their time, passion and perspectives on UCT-focussed questions of transformation.

“Transformation” is a broad term, and there is a danger that its practical value as a concept is inversely proportional to the breadth of its use. For convenience, we can conceptualize institutional transformation as two, mutually reinforcing domains. One the one hand are practical necessities, hard but easily calibrated, and underpinned by legislated imperatives. This domain includes moving towards equity in student recruitment and enrollment, correcting for prior and continuing discrimination and disadvantage through academic development programmes, and aiming for student graduation profiles unbiased by race, gender or social class. This domain also includes setting and achieving appropriate objectives for employment equity and ensuring the renewal of the university’s intellectual capital such that there are no arbitrary or unfair barriers to the best people building careers in the university if they so wish. On the other hand are the less tangible, but equally important, aspects of transformation; the traditions, symbols and customs of daily interaction that, together, constitute institutional culture, and the ways in which knowledge is conceived, constructed and transmitted. The work reported here is focused on this last aspect – on what can be called “epistemological transformation” (while also covering a number of topics). But it must always be remembered that these domains are part of a whole, and inseparable in their unity.

The task ahead was set out by the Vice-Chancellor in his objectives through until mid-2008. With regard to the epistemological issues considered here, Professor Ndebele wrote:

“The current mission and vision of UCT was adopted several years ago. With so much change having occurred within UCT and in the external environment both nationally and globally, it is timely that we revisit our vision and mission of UCT and to assess their

relevance to current and future needs of UCT. New institutional identities are emerging and are being asserted in the reconfigured higher education environment in South Africa. We must respond with confidence to these changes. The critical question for us to ask is whether our emergent transformative character can be given adequate expression by the current vision and mission and the received legacy of institutional symbols. UCT's institutional history is a formidable legacy. New symbolic expressions of that legacy can only deepen its significance further".

"What goes on in the lecture-rooms, seminar-rooms, and laboratories is most probably at the heart of the goals of transformation. It is there that institutional practices are handed down as well as challenged by historic change. The need for us, in this regard, is to pay closer attention to the interface in the curriculum between our goal to be a research-led university and the challenges of an enriched teaching and learning environment. This will require that we give closer attention to UCT's curriculum, in the broadest sense, and assess its relevance to our times, and the extent to which it contributes to deepening transformation".<sup>1</sup>

These are, of course, complex issues, requiring broad and intense consultation and discussion, and engagement with myriad interests within, and beyond, the university. The lecture-rooms, seminar-rooms and laboratories at UCT are sites for research and teaching by more than sixty distinct academic departments, each of which has varying traditions and practices of enquiry and complex networks that connect with similar disciplinary conventions across the world – the "invisible colleges" about which Paul David has written.<sup>2</sup> When these interests are combined with the complexities of relationships with external stakeholders, it is immediately apparent that these aspects of institutional transformation are particularly demanding, and not amenable to easy management solutions. The Vice Chancellor's manifesto for "Living Transformation" was, appropriately, the initiation of a sustained process of contemplation and consultation.

The complexity of these issues was set out by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in its recent call for proposals on the theme "Higher Education in Africa: Transforming Within, Preparing the Future".<sup>3</sup> CODESRIA noted that many see universities as irrelevant to contemporary issues, but that these critiques are often shallow, and fail to take account of either the historical complexities or contemporary circumstances of universities in Africa. CODESRIA noted that the serial crises that universities have faced have, in themselves, generated adaptive strategies and responses that need to be taken seriously. These strategies and responses need to be combined with an understanding of the new regimes of globalization:

"The pluralisation of knowledge production institutions and sites has become one of the key features of the current era, accelerated by the growing trade in educational services for which the World Trade Organisation has established a regime. Teaching, learning, research, documentation and dissemination activities are all, to a certain extent, taking new forms which the African academy is challenged to track and assess in the light of the project of society to which its different constituents are committed".

---

<sup>1</sup> Njabulo S Ndebele, "Living Transformation", October 2005

<sup>2</sup> David, P. (1998). Communication norms and the collective cognitive performance of 'invisible colleges'. *Creation and transfer of knowledge: institutions and incentives*. G. B. Navaretti, P. Dasgupta, K.-G. Maler and D. Siniscalco. Heidelberg, Springer-Verlag: 115-163.

<sup>3</sup> CODESRIA "Higher Education in Africa: Transforming Within, Preparing the Future", January 2005.

In responding to such circumstances resources, and the ways in which they are used to influence and direct university work, is critical to the processes of knowledge production, with implications for academic freedom and knowledge dissemination. There are multiple stakeholder interests: families and students from different social backgrounds; teaching, administrative, and technical staff; policymakers from within and outside the higher education sector; public and private employers; donors.

“What are the challenges and opportunities associated with “marketization” and “massification” that have been twin pressures and processes in African higher education at the height of its systemic crises? In the re-thinking which is called for, what are the minimum conditions necessary for building a credible academic community, the prospects for the emergence/advancement of a distinctly African knowledge system, and sustaining the university as a public good? How should one factor in the emergence of private universities and the proliferation of nongovernmental research centers? What role can information and communication technologies (ICTs) play in facilitating knowledge transmission? What kind of higher education ought to be fostered so as to resist the disorienting impact of the vagaries of contemporary globalisation? How is globalisation manifesting itself in the field of higher education itself?”

CODESRIA notes that, over the past twenty years, proposals for the transformation of universities in Africa have ranged from initial World Bank proposals that universities should be dismantled, to the opposite view (also from the World Bank) that universities are essential to development, and to proposals for new institutional forms that include specialized technical institutes, private universities, and virtual universities using satellites and the Internet for delivery. Within South Africa, the 1996 report of the National Commission on Higher Education heralded a decade of restructuring which has involved closures, incorporations and mergers, and the emergence of a new institutional type, the University of Technology. South Africa’s restructuring exercise, carried out in the name of transformation, stands of one of the most ambitious attempts on record to re-orient an entire national higher education system.

These whirlpools of re-evaluation, uncertainty and reformation are ineluctably linked to the history of the university in Africa, a point stressed by Paul Tiyambe Zeleza in his recent work, and in the summary paper included here as part of this report. Zeleza maps the depth and richness of advanced knowledge production in Africa, and the productive interplay of indigenous knowledge systems, monastic traditions, Islam, Western liberal traditions and post-colonial scholarship. His overriding message is, perhaps, the danger and shallowness of solutions proffered in response to the emergencies of immediate circumstances:

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

period of unprecedented growth during which the bulk of contemporary Africa's universities were established".

Participants in the project reported here were well aware of these complexities, bringing to the table both the breadth of CODESRIA's perspective and the depth of Zeleza's analysis. For example, Lungisile Ntsebeza stresses the diversity of institutional forms and the consequent superficiality of "one size for all" solutions to transformation. Sam Raditlhalo challenges easy mantras and unintended consequences:

"Twelve years into Uhuru and the present 'Age of Hope', we still cry 'transformation, transformation' as a mantra, the Holy Grail of our institutions. The question then becomes: what or who is applying the brakes on this transformation we all wish to see? For it will not happen by osmosis that we are able to upgrade the level of the academic competence of our universities of technology so that one day our students are able to produce micro-chips and write anti-virus software".

The project reported here seeks to respond both to the Vice-Chancellor's call to take the transformation debate to the core of knowledge production and dissemination, and to the dangers of superficial conclusions that are little more than a mantra. Rather than developing proposals, the objective is to lay out the complexity of the issues and to suggest a map for continuing discussion and consultation.

### **The Challenge**

In order to achieve the project's objective – mapping out a discourse through complexity – focus is essential. This has been achieved through the heuristic device of asking participants to respond to one of the most prominent current positions on the "developmental university" in, and for, Africa. Professor Calestous Juma (Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University) plays a prominent role in framing the United Nations' objectives for development, and in advising a range of key international agencies concerned with development in Africa. Juma's main arguments have been conveniently summarised in a posting on SciNet. In essence, Juma argues that universities in Africa can no longer afford their conventions, and must rather become "engines of community development", working directly with the communities in which they are located.

"The way ahead involves at least three types of strategic decisions. The first is to promote reform in existing universities, in order to bring the research, training and outreach activities to the service of the regions they are located in ... The second type of decision involves upgrading the level of academic competence at technical institutions that have already contributed to community development, while preserving their traditional role ... Finally, African governments are currently reviewing an increasing number of applications to set up new universities. This gives them a unique opportunity to shape the curricula, teaching and location of these institutions so they can perform developmental tasks".

This will require new relationships with governments, academia, business and civil society, far reaching reforms in curriculum design, teaching methods, student recruitment and admission and the location of campuses. In particular, Juma sees a need for a close working relationship with the private sector. Juma's vision is of revitalized knowledge creation and deployment within Africa, and for Africa, in

which the continent is at the “frontier of institutional innovation”: “nothing less will meet the challenges”.

Juma’s position on the university in Africa is provocative, and intended to change the terms of the debate about the use of knowledge in development. His work was used in this spirit in this project – as a talking point, rather than as an attempt to frame any consensus. Participants were asked to respond to his position, taking into account a number of questions:

- What does it mean for a university to be both in Africa, and in the wider world of scholarship and enquiry?
- How should the curriculum respond and contribute to the history, current context and future challenges and opportunities for Africa?
- What are the potentials in the network of relationships between those living and working in Africa, and those who are part of the global African diaspora?
- How does a university in Africa – as a centre for the creation and dissemination of knowledge – combine the ever-increasing opportunities of global networks with the particular issues of locality?
- Is there – and should there be – particular characteristics for an “African university”, or is the role of the university rather to advance universal values of enquiry?
- How does a university located in Africa take best advantage of present and potential connections with universities in other continents?
- How do scholars working in other continents see the university in Africa?
- Is Africa the “Hopeless Continent”, and its universities dependencies to be nurtured in charity?
- Or is Africa rather a source of untapped wealth in knowledge, and universities in Africa hotspots for new ways of knowing?

As will be seen from the participant positions reproduced in this report, Juma’s provocation served its purpose well. Some participants are with him, others reject his approach categorically. No one is neutral. In addition, a range of further positions emerged that have little specific tie with Juma’s stance.

An initial set of positions was assembled prior to the plenary meeting of the project, and others were invited after the plenary meeting, responding both to Juma and to the discussion. The plenary discussion was summarized and some additional material was added. These sources are collected together in this report as a resource to support continuing discussion and debate on this topic. The paragraphs that follow are an interpretation of the key strands that emerged, leading to a map for future discussion and connections with other projects in transformation.

### **Resources and the Nation**

A first theme that ran through both the formal positions and the discussion around them was that of resources – the day-by-day reproduction of the institution – and the relationship that resourcing brings with the nation.

As is well known, and as the CODESRIA overview of challenges facing higher education in Africa identifies, this is a key issue for many universities, and several participants in this project use their direct experience to make the point. Thus Nicolas

Vigaud, a French-speaking postgraduate student at UCT with experience of universities in West Africa, writes that “it might be difficult to plan ... any extensive IT project in a even brand new university equipped with computers loaded with tera-bites if there are prolonged power cuts in the locality and no available secondary self-generating source of electricity. ...”. Elom Dovlo writes of “a coma of financial deprivation which swept most of the continent for almost three decades”, although he feels that the situation in Ghana is now improving. For others, the resource crunch is felt most severely in staffing, diminishing the ability of universities in Africa to attract and retain good academics and administrators. Thus Alinah Segobe (University of Botswana), feels that “the current mismatch between resources distribution (financial, infrastructure, and human) needs to be revisited with a view to prioritize intellectual development in Africa”.

Ibrahima Thiaw (University of Cheika Anta Diop, Dakar) links the underlying issue of resource provision with other elements of transformation, seeing a syndrome of increasing student numbers, declining resources and the consequent impossibility of improvement:

“Over the past few decades, student enrolment has considerably grown, while the job market is dearth, leading to a profound crisis in the higher education system. This crisis is only one the many that struck Africa today. The name of our continent seems to rhythms with poverty, contagious diseases, drought and hunger, wars and social upheavals. Indeed Africa appears as helpless, and one may wonder what universities in the continent have been doing or are doing to uplift it? ... Indeed curricular adaptation toward the specificities of the job market and the problems and needs of the community where the university is located are crucial for a fresh start. This, when supported by government policy, should lead to meaningful change... Many African countries spent billions to educate a mass of students that ended up either in foreign countries, or constitute a mass of unemployed. Under these conditions, higher education appears like an investment loss in many African countries. These questions make me believe that a much broader and profound reform than curriculum alone is needed. ... For curriculum change to have any significant impact, it must be accompanied with adequate research infrastructures, including laboratories, equipment, libraries, an effective system to store, retrieve and exploit information database, a system to encourage, evaluate and reward high calibre research, etc.”

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

Given the amount of attention it has attracted (for example, in the expectations of the African Virtual University), there is often the suggestion that information and communication technologies can “leapfrog” the resourcing crisis in African higher education. Crain Soudien (Education, UCT) concentrates on this issue, reporting a recent study that explores what the use of ICT has meant in practice:

“ICT provision, the argument goes, will enhance the prospects – particularly through cross-border provision - for opening up and expanding access, building capacity, sharing leadership and improve research capacity... While it is difficult at this point to make definitive statements, the study is beginning to show important institutional differences which relate to their historical context and important disciplinary differences. These are important in beginning to address the questions of the promise that ICTs hold as a teaching and learning platform. They suggest that possibilities for promoting access do exist, but they also point to the significant difficulties that arise in putting these to use”.

Geri Augusto (an independent researcher associated with Brown University) endorses Soudien’s concerns. In studying Africa, and connecting the African diaspora with the continent, it is often assumed that ICT is a neutral medium, redolent with possibility. However, we need to understand ICT as a medium structured in the interests of the west, with its own epistemology.

UCT participants were largely silent on the issue of basic resources; despite frequent internal complaints about lack of funding, the University of Cape Town is clearly a cornucopia of funding in comparison with universities in other parts of Africa. This led Joe Muller, in his summing up, to issue a challenge on this issue:

What about the money? Here is a nettle whose grasping simply cannot be deferred. Globally, public funding of higher education is declining, nowhere more so than in Africa, where low economic growth rates are putting further pressure on the public purse. Juma’s solution is to get the private sector to help pay for the assets it depends upon the universities to provide. The idea provoked a marked squeamishness amongst the participants at this symposium, who avoided rather than engaged with the question. Avoidance leads, as we see all too clearly in much of Africa, to the default position of creeping privatisation from below, or in other words, to the unconstrained establishment of private universities, sponsored by religious or business concerns, which in many African countries have come to outnumber the public institutions. There are those who place some faith in the power of foreign aid. Whilst this is indeed currently fulsome in some quarters, it would be short-sighted indeed to imagine that it could ever be more than a palliative, never a solution for the public higher education system.

As CODESRIA has recognized, as well as participants from universities that have had to survive sustained resourcing shortfalls, the material requirements of bricks and mortar, computer equipment, electricity supply and reasonably competitive staff salaries underpin the continuity of the university as an institution. While this issue has yet to have anything close to comparable severity in South Africa, particularly at UCT, public funding of higher education is declining across the globe, and can nowhere be taken for granted.

With the exception of private universities, the issue of resources invariably involves the relationship between the university and the state. As Paul Zeleza’s overview of higher education in Africa shows, the contemporary university in Africa is closely implicated in the creation and history of the post-colonial nation state:

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

Across Africa the growth in higher education after independence was nothing short of phenomenal. The new states embarked on ambitious development programs in which universities were seen as central for training a highly skilled labor force, creating and reproducing a national elite, and enhancing national prestige. The new national universities were quite diverse and flexible in their structures and models. On the whole, they were much larger in size than their colonial predecessors, broader in their missions, and they expanded their disciplinary and curricula offerings from the arts and social sciences to include professional fields of study such as business, medicine and engineering, and they incorporated graduate programs.

However, the diminution of funding from this state can render this relationship a poisoned chalice. Nana Wilson-Tagoe (currently with the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) argues that, while the university should still be seen as a national institution, this should be countered by independent sources of funding: "the old system in which universities were funded entirely by governments and therefore totally controlled by presidents and military leaders would be transformed if universities found independent sources of funding".

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

There has, of course, been a great deal of discussion about the relationship between the state and the higher education system in South Africa, given the decade long restructuring exercise that has taken place. Elsewhere, it has been pointed out that, since the passing of the Higher Education Act in 1997, the South African state has consistently tightened its control over the higher education system, diminishing the autonomy of individual institutions in the interests of a national system that can be steered in the national interest.<sup>4</sup> This issue is picked up by Lungisile Ntsebeza (Sociology, UCT) who, in the plenary discussion, began to unpick the various functions expected of universities, in all their variability. For Ntsebeza, the challenge

---

<sup>4</sup> Martin Hall and Ashley Symes, "South African Higher Education in the first decade of democracy: from co-operative governance to conditional autonomy". *Studies in Higher Education*, 30 (2): 199-212, 2005.

for a university such as UCT is to find ways in which the university can both continue to do what it does well, and at the same time open up its resources for those who are marginalized and excluded – finding ways to meet the requirements of the state.

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

“What if development should not be left to the private sector ... but is rather retained as the preserve of the state, an option not incompatible with Castells’ view? The model offered in this context is that of Cuba, a particularly good one, because there is now a burgeoning empirical literature which shows that in the equitable distribution of services and competences, Cuba far outstrips its Latin American counterparts. What is it doing right? It has a strong developmental state that sends clear and unambiguous signals to the education system as to what is expected; but perhaps more interestingly, it becomes an active agent of social cohesion, a project linked in to the project of development. How would this deal differently with the universities? Well, it would not tolerate the poorly performing institutions, and would close them forthwith. Universities would also have to sing very smartly for their supper. Much that goes for academic freedom currently in Africa would be regarded as an expendable indulgence. These are the sacrifices to be expected, small, if the national interest is weighed as paramount”.

### **Unpacking Development**

A second theme to run through the positions reported here was the interrogation of the concept of “development”: in this respect, using Calestous Juma as an *agent provocateur* was particularly valuable. For some, the discourse of development, with the implication that, in contrast with Africa, the north and the west are “developed” is a reinscription of subordination. As Sam Raditlhalo (English Language and Literatures, UCT) puts it, “whose development, and for whose benefit? Development is an abused term since it suggests a lack, a deviance from the norm. Development Theory itself comes into being as a result of having displaced the colonizing theory, to repudiate the notion of ‘civilizing the barbarians’ ...”. We will return to this line of interpretation later in this report, when we consider epistemological issues. Others, while of course fully aware of colonialism and its consequences, take a more pragmatic approach, seeing the problems that Africa faces as an overriding emergency. This is the spirit of Alinah Segobye’s intervention, when she writes that “the African University in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should respond to the major development challenges facing the continent today. The twin epidemics of poverty and public health challenges (TB, Malaria and HIV/AIDS) challenge the African University to situate its research agendas around applied research to innovate technologies for empowering communities to mitigate extreme poverty and improved quality of life, particularly health”. However, this should not be taken as an easy acceptance of the developed/ underdeveloped opposition – as Crain Soudien (Education, UCT) warned, beware the binaries!

All the contributions to this project move beyond Calestous Juma’s assumption that there is a clear, uncontested, development agenda. The issue, of course, is whether unpicking the history, assumptions and implications of development politics and

practices is essential to moving on, or whether it is a self-interested debate, inclined to the arcane, and of the sort that has encouraged the argument that the university is no longer relevant to key challenges such as healthcare, universal standards of education, food security and the eradication of poverty. In this regard, one danger signal – and Soudien’s point – is when discussion reverts to simple opposites: “applied research” versus “pure research”, “relevance” versus “blue sky”, “academic” versus “practical”. Notably, the contributions to this project avoid this trap, and therefore the danger of shunting the concept of the university back into a siding as the freight train of intervention and action rumbles on by.

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

The complexity of the relationship of the community of the university and the global world of scholarship comes through in the relationship between the university in Africa and the continent’s intellectual diaspora. Dan Izevbaye makes the point that we cannot understand the role of the university in Africa without taking account of this factor:

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

The view of Africa from “outside”, then, is “domesticated” for the rest of the world primarily by diasporic Africans, who are both beneficiaries of the opportunities available to them in the north and west, and victims of continuing prejudices about Africa. Indeed these very opportunities, and prejudices, are rooted in the colonial domination of Africa, and are mediated by a general reordering of boundaries and flows in a still-unfinished process of globalization. In such a fluid set of circumstances, the false certainties of binaries would indeed be dangerous.

In discussion, Izevbaye amplified this complex politics of practice by noting that some have made the case that knowledge about Africa is better developed and disseminated within the diaspora, rendering those who have stayed behind as a sort of

intellectual underclass. This would make those in the diaspora both the agents and the victims of the West. Nana Wilson-Tagoe responded by pointing out that diasporic scholars have worked hard to change the discourse of Africa across the range of the disciplines:

“Universities should tap their resources and invite their collaboration instead of seeing them negatively as unpatriotic deserters. With their particular knowledge of external sources such scholars can help with grant-writing schemes for international funding and share their expertise in various new ways. I suggest that African universities compile a data base of African scholars abroad and seek active research and teaching collaboration with them.”

All this said, there was a consensus that the resources of the university are directly applicable to local and immediate needs, and need to be deployed appropriately. As Alison Lewis (Engineering, UCT) pointed out

“The special contribution of engineers is based on their ability to solve problems, using an understanding of fundamental scientific concepts to design and build processes, infrastructure, machines, buildings and products and thus science for the benefit of the community. In the context of science and engineering, general principles will be similar throughout the world, in many different contexts, since they are broadly applicable. However, the local details become extremely relevant when the principle is applied to a specific instance and must be taken into account in the application. Neglecting local conditions or getting them wrong can be disastrous”.

Similarly for Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan (Zoology, UCT), “Science, Engineering and Technology are essential for socio-economic development. More specifically, science based solutions are needed in Africa for poverty alleviation, disease eradication, agricultural productivity, employment, wealth creation, and sustainable development”.

Putting knowledge-based interventions into effect in the service of such pressing local issues raises two, inter-related dimensions – the nature of the appropriate agency, and the characteristics of the knowledge that can be used to best effect. Again, these are complex issues that have been unveiled as part of this project, but are by no means resolved.

As far as agency is concerned, a number of participants argued for new forms of institutional relationships between university and community. In discussion, Ibrahima Thiaw stressed that scholars need to get close to their communities and build mutual trust. The university needs to interpret the global for such local communities, respecting and supporting the strength of local cultures. Elom Dovlo agreed: “for university education to be relevant to development there is the need to create an interface between the universities and the public and private stakeholders ... “Domestication” of knowledge will make universities in Africa truly relevant to their context. This does not mean losing sight of universal values of inquiry but contributing African dimensions to it ... there needs to be a new generation of universities in Africa that address the development needs of the continent and focuses on community problem solving”.

For others, however, the notion of community-as-agency was more complicated. In discussion, John Higgins (English Language and Literatures, UCT) argued that the concept of “community” needs to be unpacked. The need to offer service to the community is constantly repeated in discussions about the role of the university in Africa, creating the illusion that, presently, universities do not provide services to the community. But is this the case? One of the key functions of the university is to replicate professional classes, and universities are constantly doing this already. The push for “service to the community” may put at risk the other central functions of the university.

### **Ways of Knowing**

This leads into consideration of the forms of knowledge that are most likely to bring direct benefit to communities, thereby contributing to the immediacies of the development agenda (even while the political legitimacy of this agenda is questioned). In Higgins’ example, communities will benefit through access to the professional qualifications offered by a university – a particular form of knowledge transmission. Alinah Segobye makes a similar point:

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

But for others there is a danger in Elom Dovlo’s vision of “domesticated knowledge”, or Alinah Segobye’s metaphor of learning and ideas bonded with the needs of an African citizenry. Maano Ramutsindela, Vanessa Watson, Melvin Ayogu and Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan each presented the counter-view that local needs are best served by the universalist concept of knowledge that is the distinctive signature of the traditional university:

Maano Ramutsindela: “clearly, there is merit in suggesting that universities in the continent should address Africa's development challenges... If we agree that development constitutes any diverse and multifaceted process of a predominantly positive change in the quality of life of individuals and society, in both material and non-material respects, universities in the continent and elsewhere cannot, and should not, be restricted to performing one function, even in terms of development paradigms”

Vanessa Watson: “It is difficult to accept the argument ... that entire universities, and all the departments within them, should necessarily have to focus their activities in this kind of way. Universities benefit in all kinds of ways from the diversity of their offerings, which in turn opens up the possibilities of inter- and trans- disciplinary work. It is also difficult to accept what seems to be the ‘two world’ assumption ... that the ‘developing’ world, including Africa, is experiencing a distinct set of problems and issues separate from, and not necessarily connected to, the ‘developed world’.

Melvin Ayogu: “The question for Africa is not whether universities in Africa should be in the forefront of knowledge generation for solving Africa’s development challenges. The issue in my mind is how to coordinate the potential and existing knowledge infrastructure and policy milieu in order to galvanize the generation of crucial knowledge”.

Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan: To be internationally competitive, I believe that it is important that Universities in Africa not simply become 'developmental universities' or put 'in service to African people' .... Although much of scientific research in Africa should contribute to socio-economic upliftment, Science in Africa also needs 'blue sky' research i.e. research that has no practical day-to-day application (e.g. astronomy, archaeology, palaeontology etc.), but is important for the generation of scientific knowledge"

There are, then, tensions along the axis that connects community with the world – the imperfectly understood organizational structures that could meld ivory tower with township shack, and the nature and extent of the knowledge that can best serve the pressing consequences of social and economic marginalization, the "development agenda" that many see as too important to be left to university-based intellectuals. These come together in the incomplete consideration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Universities in South Africa, and perhaps UCT in particular, have been slow to internalize the debate about Indigenous Knowledge Systems, succumbing too easily to caricatures such as "African Physics" or the use of beetroots to counter HIV. As Nicolas Vigaud reminds us, indigenous knowledge is a natural asset for the university in Africa: "indigenous knowledge is something natural and very nourishing: a community grows first locally from its own realities and experiences, so then to develop relevant focuses and approaches". Vigaud points out that the form and utility of a mathematical theorem is not diminished by knowing that its basis was discovered in Egypt, 1500 years before Pythagoras. Similarly, Ibrahima Thiaw finds it sad that "scholars in Africa are generally more informed about research, technical and theoretical innovations, and publications taking place in Europe and North America than from our immediate African neighbour. Perhaps one of the keys to solving some of the many problems our universities are faced with is to develop student and faculty exchanges, study and teaching abroad to share expertise and experience. This will foster the development and circulation of local knowledge and know how within Africa while minimizing the risks on our own cultural values."

This project has benefited from a background paper on this issue submitted by Mogomme Masoga, and reproduced here. Indigenous Knowledge is understood as "owned by local people in their specific communities and passed on from generation to generation ... It could be rural or urban. The term "embedded" is used in the general sense of "knowledge" being around when needed by the people themselves. A considerable part of IK is related to the survival of the community, in general or specific fields, such as protection and use of the local environment, enhancing food security, especially during periods of stress. Some of this knowledge brings pleasure, reinforces tradition and belief systems and gives a sense of belonging and relatedness. The stock of knowledge is part of the culture or way of life of a people or community."

Masoga's definition connects with the ways of knowing envisaged by Thiaw and Dovlo in their call for new forms of relationships with local communities. But it is not clear how such indigenous knowledge can be integrated into the broad intellectual project of the university – points that are made by both Carolyn Hamilton (Wits) and Brenda Cooper (African Studies, UCT). Bella Mukonyora, a Zimbabwean scholar currently with Western Kentucky University, points to specific dangers of misappropriation, as in the case of the politics of Shona identity, where indigenous

knowledge claims have been used to support political violence. She writes that the categorization of knowledge as indigenous can accentuate marginalization by denying students a critical and comparative understanding of the world at large. If, however, an awareness of indigenous knowledge is incorporated into a comprehensive knowledge system, the outcome can be liberatory:

“Just as universities located in the west are increasingly including in their educational systems, projects by which to widen the horizons of students beyond western cultures, a university located in Africa for Africa should wake up to the need to take seriously its own indigenous knowledge systems along side those others that explain the marginality of Africa in a global society. This way indigenous knowledge systems should be used to complete in students and understanding of the world they live in, not divide people and limit the horizons of students so that they are not able to benefit from advanced education abroad.”

In support of which, Nicolas Vigaud offers an appropriately Gallic metaphor: “what is globalisation regarding knowledge? A unique soup without flavour where all is lost at once, or a collective table covered with the best plates we each know and share the recipe?”

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

### **Epistemic Decolonization**

These positions on necessary resources, the relationship between university and nation, local community and the world of scholarship and the antinomies of the diaspora invariably invoke the nature of knowledge itself. Whether a practical matter of being able to afford journal subscriptions or a conceptual issue, such as the definition of indigenous, the university is a “knowledge organization”, as much virtual as concrete, and with the core purposes of creating new knowledge through scholarship and research, and disseminating knowledge through teaching and application. Appropriately, the positions developed in this project returned repeatedly to these epistemological issues.

Of course, there is nothing here that is specific to the university in Africa and no reason to assume that all universities in Africa are the same, as Lungisile Ntsebeza and others emphasise. It is rather that a pervasive sense of crisis attenuates these issues – the threats to the very existence of the university as an institution that were articulated by CODESRIA, or the interminable restructuring of the South African higher education system. Will the state continue to support national universities and public higher education systems, and will this be at the price of surrendering control over the way in which knowledge is shaped? What would be the trade off, in terms of directions in research and teaching, for seeking alternative resources from the private sector, or from donors? How should inquiry be structured in the face of extreme social and economic issues – poverty, AIDS, the collapse of education systems, war and

genocide? What to do when there is a one-way flow of graduates out of the continent, denying a return on the intellectual investment in the next generation of scholars. For academics in universities in the north and west, these are conceptual possibilities, useful in rhetorical struggles but unlikely to come to pass. For academics in many universities in Africa, these are realities, and the ways in which epistemology becomes manifest in struggles for the day-by-day reproduction of the institution.

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

For Bella Mukonyora, the complex of issues around local and global knowledge, the social value of education, and the application of knowledge to key social issues come together around the design of the curriculum:

“Successful universities are those that take seriously the needs of the local communities they serve as part of building bridges between the local and the global. It would be a sign of bad faith on the part of the academics concerned with the university in Africa not to see that their role is like that of other progressive universities. i.e. that of a) building the confidence of its students; b) promoting in them an understanding of the social reality of South Africa, the rest of the continent, and, c) I would add, learning what goes on in Europe and America from which the global economy continues to be controlled. In short, there is scope for the advancement of as many knowledge systems as it takes to support the growth of a society of people who can make intelligent choices, promote justice and peace in the modern world. More importantly in order to successfully curb problems of poverty, disease, droughts and other misfortunes, relationships based knowledge need to be forged with other countries in African and beyond.

Lungisile Ntsebeza endorses this approach, noting that a curriculum that is initially informed by local experiences and concerns is a matter of perspective rather than parochialism, since “by focusing on the concerns, needs, interests and priorities of South Africans, particularly the historically disadvantaged, we can engage with the global in such a manner that we advance our needs and interests rather than those of the “North” and the rich”. Insisting that the curriculum is grounded in this way is to recognize that knowledge is invariably embedded in a context – Alison Lewis’s point that Engineering curricula apply general principles to local problems. It is also to recognize that knowledge is, in some way, socially constructed. As John Higgins puts it, “practical knowledge is everywhere embodied in cultural practice – specifically linguistic, but also corporeal and gendered, and obedient to social rules that are likely to be both conscious and unconscious, poised, as it were, just adjacent to and in practice overlapping with, the realm of pure knowledge. .. In reality, this means that few of the world’s problems – from AIDS to Overpopulation and Climate Change – are amenable to exclusively scientific and technological resolution”.

It is already apparent that, rather than a simple matter of rules and procedures, curriculum is complex territory that is likely to be contested. Recognizing this, Brenda Cooper argues transformation of the curriculum requires understanding the ways in which knowledge in Africa has been constructed across a range of discourses. She uses the example of the work of UCT's Centre for African Studies to illustrate this point:

“The teaching of Africa *in* Africa must be mainstreamed into the disciplines ... This transformation is occurring at the level of the nature of the production of knowledge, the curriculum, and the forging of new partnerships ... the work we do in CAS at UCT is focussed on examining the ways in which knowledge of Africa has been constructed in a wide range of discourses. These run through the entire spectrum from the images of Africa in popular culture to the more academic questions of the nature of the construction of the disciplines themselves, their methodology and language, which were forged in the alliance between knowledge and power. We strive to provide a critical understanding of how knowledge in and about Africa, and the scholarship through which that knowledge is filtered, has been mediated through the lenses of the colonial and the Apartheid libraries. In the process, African intellectual histories, knowledges, languages and scholarship have often been distorted and buried. We attempt to understand this historically, politically and within the framework that contact, mixture and syncretism characterise all societies”

And John Higgins uses the relevant example of HIV and AIDS:

“Whatever treatment of AIDS science can provide, the reality of that treatment is a complex cultural transaction that requires the contribution of humanistic understanding to make it work. A successful AIDS policy requires work in history, theory, cultural identity, the dynamics of communication and representation, gender and sexual disposition to have any chance of success ... What the example of AIDS suggests, in conclusion, is that for universities to make their proper contribution to addressing the goals of social development means placing or accepting the fact that the humanistic understanding of the facts of culture, history, politics and representation are essential to putting the practical knowledges of science and technology into practice”.

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

Positions taken and argued during this project opened up the politics of the curriculum in several rich and provocative ways, each of which will be avenues for continuing debate.

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

In the face of this ... several interesting initiatives on the continent have been developed in order to “reinvent” the African university through networks, incorporating live seminar-space, a range of virtual spaces, and number of different forms of both publication and teaching ... the term “development” is too dangerous to be drawn upon as a term through which to imagine different possibilities of knowledge generation, possibilities which may indeed encompass resolution of local deprivations ... notions of fluidity, multi-modal mobilities, and bi/multi-literacies in terms of the meanings for teaching, production, and intellectual alliances offer interesting ways of both conceptualizing – and living within – “African university” terrain unconstrained by local walls but viscerally alert to the bricks and mortar of our days”.

A second, related, line of thought is what Tony Bogues (formerly University of the West Indies, currently Brown University) terms “epistemic decolonization”, a process that starts with the curriculum, with “confrontation within disciplines themselves”. This set of concerns is with the ways in which the curriculum may reproduce pre-conceived categories of thought, often in the name of “standards” set in the west or north, that subordinate other ways of knowing. The persisting unease with Calestous Juma’s position on “development” falls into this area; while Juma is unambiguous in calling for the regeneration of the university within Africa, he is at the same time calling for an “African curriculum” that is practical and applied, reserving by implication theoretical and conceptual intellectual work for places such as Harvard. Bogues’ critique acknowledges that such epistemological subordination is not necessarily imposed from outside – we often do it to ourselves. As Sam Raditlhalo puts it, “the universities’ agendas seem to be to assimilate as many graduates as possible into Western epistemologies, thought processes, and cultural practices. We are in effect producing cultural mulattoes, at an accelerated rate, without grounding in who they are, what heritage they have, which cultural ethos to aspire to. The Eurocentricism to which universities aspire is a case for serious concern”.

Tony Bogues develops his point through the specific example of the teaching of Philosophy at the University of Cape Town:

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

The critique could be extended to a range of disciplines at UCT, and other universities in Africa. The point that Bogue and Raditlhalo are making (as well as others involved in this project, including Geri Augusto, Jane Bennett, Natasha Distiller, Brenda Cooper, Dan Izevbye, Bella Mukonyora and Vanessa Watson) is not that a choice has to be made. No one is arguing that Western philosophy, or Shakespeare, the Impressionists, modernist architecture or Galileo’s contribution to science have no place in the curriculum in Africa. The point is rather, as Mogomme Masoga argues in his case for Indigenous Knowledge Systems, that epistemes of Africa must be as embedded in the curriculum of the university in Africa as, for example, the critical study of American history is embedded in the curriculum of every good US university, or the central place of French literature in teaching and research at the Sorbonne. In Jane Bennett’s words:

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

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

“It is now an accepted fact that the modern African university, although has contributed significantly to the training of civil servants for the independent states, it has remained alien to the African context... Language remains one of the major obstacles in the link between the African university and its community, the academia and the masses. African universities have despite the end to colonialism, and apartheid in the case of South Africa, remain committed to the use of foreign languages such as English and French as the mediums of education. In fact, up to now, there is no university in sub-Saharan Africa which uses an African language as a medium of education in discipline other than

language ... The move towards multilingual higher education in South Africa, and perhaps in Africa as a whole, is highly recommended if the dream of “an African university for Africa” is to be realised. The rationale for multilingual higher education is to support the African university to meet the requirements of global and national participation and the specific needs of particular, culturally and linguistically distinct communities. Accordingly, multilingual higher education will enable the African university to maximize the benefits of internationalization while promoting the preservation of cultural identities, mobility and dialogue. The big question, however, is how can multilingual education be practically implemented in African universities. There is no easy answer to this question.”

During discussion, this point was picked up by Sam Raditlhalo, and related to the issue of identity. How can language, as well as other local resources, be used to good effect to make the curriculum empowering of individuals, contributing to epistemic decolonization? Raditlhalo again suggested that we look to Cuba for example, breaking out of the conventional frames of comparative reference that we use.

These three sub-themes – patriarchy, epistemic decolonization and language – begin to show how the question of the curriculum can be opened up, both within and between disciplines. One well-tried way of doing this is through models of practice – examples of interventions that have worked elsewhere, or which suggest themselves as an outcome of debate and discussion. Several such models emerged during this project, and well illustrate the potential of the curriculum as an area of transformation.

Nana Wilson-Tagoe insists on the connection between the epistemology of knowledge and ways of teaching and learning: “to meet the heightened requirement for new knowledge universities in Africa must be willing to move beyond inherited schedules and methodologies to experiment with different kinds and modes of teaching and learning”. And Lungisile Ntsebeza makes a related set of points in the more specific context of the challenges facing universities in South Africa:

“The broader context within which to locate UCT in post-1994 South Africa is, firstly, the division between historically black universities, in most cases hugely under resourced on the one hand and well resourced historically white universities on the other. Secondly, in terms of the curriculum, there was largely an avoidance particularly pre-1994 to teach courses which focused on the African continent and hardly any engagement with universities on the continent and its scholars. Dealing with this schizophrenia poses a major challenge for a university such as UCT. At home, the challenge is how UCT can transform itself from a university which largely catered for the needs and interests of a tiny white minority drawn from the middle to upper classes, to opening up its resources to also accommodate the needs and interests of the downtrodden, mainly blacks. Within the continent, the challenge is for UCT to demonstrate in concrete terms that it not only sees itself as a university that is geographically located on the continent but an integral part thereof. The critical question for our purposes, I suppose, is what this all means for the curriculum. ... Institutions such as UCT are also charged, following Ndebele, with broadening access to previously excluded students. In other words, the challenge for UCT is how to ensure that its resources are deployed such that students from the historically disadvantaged backgrounds benefit. Should UCT take this bold, important and necessary step, enough resources should be provided to ensure that these students are not marginalised and frustrated when once they gain access.”

These points prompted discussion on new ways of teaching that would break out of the conventional boundaries of fields of knowledge – the separation of Engineering, the Sciences and Humanities. Geri Augusto developed further her concept of “disastrous opportunities” (built on the ways in which curriculum responses had been developed in response to the devastation of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina), suggesting the model of a “portal course”. Rather than a structured curriculum, this would be a space for creative dialogue across the fields and disciplines of the university, for example on the theme of “medical dilemmas”. Such a portal course would be transdisciplinary, and would assist epistemic decolonization by escaping the conventional boxes of the curriculum.

Discussion of such new methodologies, and their connection with the way knowledge is constructed and the organizational superstructure of disciplines and Faculties, barriers and opportunities circles around a core, unresolved issue. This was highlighted by Brenda Cooper in describing the gains and losses in designing and implementing a Humanities course for Engineering students. What is the essence of the relationship between the sciences and the humanities, and can they (or should they) be brought together in a single “epistemological space”?

There is certainly a prevalent belief that the sciences and the humanities should find more common purpose in the interests of the future of the university in Africa. Offering a student point of view, Samuel King writes of a “subtle schism” that keeps students from Engineering, the Sciences and Humanities apart. King urges curriculum redesign so that “students from the different faculties can develop an appreciation for disciplines other than their own”. Sam Radithalo describes the consequences of this schism with characteristic brio: “it borders on the ridiculous that our own students do not know anything about themselves. Medical students have, to date, not read a single Zales Mda text, nor a Chinua Achebe text, do not know of Walter Rodney’s intellectual legacy, nor Franz Fanon’s, nor Njabulo Ndebele as author, or Mphahlele as the last living intellectual of the New African Movement, nor Miriam Tlali, any other Southern, let alone African writer”. Bella Mukonyora, Elom Dovlo and Nana Wilson-Tagoe each stress the urgency of bringing these different knowledge fields together. Nana Wilson-Tagoe:

“We must not let the logic of visible technological transformations determine our course offerings. How we see ourselves- our history, our accumulated thinking and our new post-colonial aspirations as Africans should be part of our new positioning in the global economy. The value of the humanities cannot always be measured in terms of visible transformations in communities. But the habits of critical thought they inculcate, their critical engagement with values, and their nurturing of all forms of creativity must be seen as part of national development.”

However, despite such stated intentions across a number of universities, this sort of curriculum transformation seems rarely to happen, and to be burdened with difficulties when it is attempted. Joe Muller sees this as the expression of “the traditional gulf and tension between the Humanities on the one hand, and science and technology on the other”, and an inevitability:

“The two styles of knowledge commerce are thus fundamentally different. When scientists say, for example, that they feel alienated by Humanities talk, what alienates them is the intellectual project of disputation and critique as an end in itself. They are

fundamentally puzzled because, where their allegiances lie, the intellectual project is about cumulative integration at a higher level of synthesis, disputation in the service of higher agreement. To risk trivialisation: where the Humanities do critique, the sciences do equations and flowcharts. Mutual misrecognition and mutual alienation should not be surprising”.

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

“This is one of the skills the humanities can offer to our students: ways of asking self-conscious questions. If our work enables graduates to leave the institution better able to deconstruct the meaning that is being made around them, in all forms of media and in the workings of the everyday, they will be better able to make choices about who they want to be and about how they want to interact with other people. For me, this is the most important definition of being educated. It is also one way to effect social change. Students who do not take things for granted, who interrogate the common-sensical, who know to look for the inevitable investments in any construction of the truth, are people who are well-equipped to navigate the choppy waters of post-apartheid South Africa, and offer useful interventions into the patriarchal structure at whatever level they engage it”

### **Implications for Transformation**

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

A first point to note is that attempts to transform the curriculum are never easy. This is because the university is built out of multiple contradictions and diverse interests. This was apparent to Immanuel Kant, whose 1798 essay, translated as “The Conflict of the Faculties”, shaped Von Humboldt’s concept for the University of Berlin, widely recognized as the prototype for the western research university. Kant mapped out tensions between the university and the state, and further tensions between what he termed the higher and lower Faculties, and which would today be recognized as the Humanities and the Sciences, on the one hand, and the professional and vocational

disciplines, on the other. Derrida engaged with Kant's ideas in 1980, as part of a process of self-reflection at Columbia University. This – and other – literature reminds us that there are no easy fixes here.

Derrida's essay is a reflection on the nature of responsibility, as it pertains to the university, and is relevant to continuing debates on this issue twenty-five years later. Derrida shows how the university is a place of multiple contradictions; those that Kant identified, but others that have become more significant since the late eighteenth century: the conflict of interest with external research bodies that tend to marginalize the work of the university, "businessmen of knowledge" who seek to organize what the university does, and the language in which knowledge must be articulated and communicated, the "performative structure" of knowledge. The university, then, is a site that is traversed by "unavoidable conflict" because of the very nature of what it does. That said, Derrida argues that it is necessary to take a position, "in work itself, toward the politico-institutional structures that constitute and regulate our practice, our competences, and our performances", requiring "a new questioning about responsibility....". Given the inherently conflictual nature of the university, Derrida does not believe that such a position will emerge from some sort of consensus, but will rather come from what he terms "levers": "when one asks how to be oriented in history, morality or politics, the most serious discords and decisions have to do less often with ends, it seems to me, than with levers".<sup>5</sup>

Quite a few of the participants in this project tended towards Derridean levers of change for the university: Geri Augusto's "disastrous opportunities", the concept of a portal course that was developed during discussion, Jane Bennett's focus on the politics and practice of gender, Sam Raditlhalo's urge to teach medical students Mda, Achebe, Rodney, Fanon's, Ndebele and Mphahlele. Approaches such as these could perhaps be termed the "subversive Humanities", and could be matched by "subversive Science"; the challenges of evolutionary theory demonstrated through the allure of dinosaurs, green chemistry, the challenges of urban growth, the mysteries of HIV. They suggest that the curriculum will be changed incrementally, as knowledge is used to challenge the status quo within, between and across disciplinary fields.

But if such levers are to have effect – to demonstrate traction beyond their immediate application, creating lasting change – they need to be enabled by an appropriate intellectual environment that seeks the exciting possibilities in thinking differently. This project identified a way forward in furthering such an environment, in the key relationship between the Humanities and the Sciences. If we put aside Joe Muller's pessimism (granting, at the same time, that he may be proved right), we are seeking John Higgins' advanced literacy, or Natasha Distiller's questioning of the status quo through the application of theory, or Dan Izevbye's vision of an African intelligentsia. To adapt Kant's metaphor to the contemporary university, we can perhaps think of "formative" and "professional" Faculties (rather than "lower" and "higher"). The Sciences and Humanities are the formative core of the university, the site where epistemology is moulded. The professional Faculties (Law, Commerce, Medicine, Engineering) are more directly related to the world. Such a model will cause instant outrage, as lawyers medical researchers and economists assume that

---

<sup>5</sup> Derrida, J. (1992). *Mochlos; or, The Conflict of the Faculties. Logomachia: the Conflict of the Faculties.* R. Rand. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press: 1-34.

their intellectual work is being given second-class status, and sociologists, chemists and mathematicians protest for the recognition of the practical values of their disciplines. However, outrage is itself a lever for change, and may promote wider debate on this key set of issues.

In aiding this discussion, it would be valuable to follow Vanessa Watson's observations about the Aristotelian unit of knowledge, the interconnections between episteme ("scientific knowledge, universal, invariable, context-independent"), techne ("pragmatic, technical, oriented towards production, driven by practical instrumental rationality"), and phronesis ("ethics, deliberation about values with reference to praxis, context-dependent, based on practical value-rationality, concerned with how deliberation about values and interests shape the allocation of public resources, about who gets what, how and when – the key issues relating to the planning and management of the built environment").

"All these three forms of knowledge are closely interlinked and cannot be separated. Phronesis draws on both theory – episteme- (including theories of ethics) and a deep understanding of context to produce technical solutions (techne). ... How can 'development' be taken forward without a questioning of the ethics and judgements that shape it, and this exploration is certainly not part of 'techne'. ...Any university which attempted to separate these integrally related elements of knowledge and apply only one (techne) would be intellectually impoverished."

The Sciences and the Humanities, then, need to come together around a series of key transformative issues. These need to include reflection on the nature of enquiry, the relationship between the different fields of knowledge, interdependencies and collaborations, the issue of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and the relationship between research, teaching and the application of knowledge to pressing social and economic issues. Contributions to this project showed the clear potential in some of these fields of discussion: the broad approach to HIV and AIDS, understanding cities in Africa, the need for broad literacy, the challenges and opportunities of language.

A third area of work, contributing both to pragmatic curriculum development and the search for new ways of conceptualizing the core relationship between the Sciences and the Humanities, concerns the wider network. Many participants in this project saw value in connections between universities, both in Africa and in other continents. At Thandabantu Nhlapo puts it:

"The continent is looking to higher education to lead the way in identifying evidence-based solutions aimed at addressing the challenges facing the continent. It is also expecting higher education institutions to cooperate with one another in order to maximize the potential that exists in Africa to deal with its own problems. This expectation is shared by donor agencies, who have made it clear that collaborative ventures are to be encouraged as they widen the impact of initiatives and increase the prospects of sustainability. The time has never been more right for the African university to take internationalisation seriously, starting with the strengthening of engagement amongst themselves."

In this regard, it is useful to see the networks that link universities (or more accurately, perhaps, universities as clusters of specific points of connection) as assets in themselves, the "invisible colleges" that define academia. New technologies for

communication offer huge possibilities for developing these networks while, as Geri Augusto warns us, never being without effect in their own forms of categorization and cultural influence.

Of particular importance is the relationship with the diaspora. As a number of participants note, African universities are ambivalent about the diaspora. But, as others point out, the diaspora is the front line of representation of Africa in the west and north, mediating perceptions and providing vital connections with the continent. There would be a significant opportunity in the explicit consideration of the role that the African diaspora can play in building stronger networks that sustain and advance the production of knowledge in, and of, Africa.

## **Calestous Juma: We need to reinvent the African university**

14 June 2005

Source: SciDev.Net

*Calestous Juma argues that addressing Africa's development challenges requires the creation of a new generation of universities that focus on solving community problems.*

The rising interest in Africa's future has coincided with a new awakening of interest within international development agencies in the role of technological innovation in economic growth. But much of the discussion on Africa's development only marginally addresses the need to harness the world's existing fund of knowledge for development.

The Commission for Africa chaired by UK prime minister Tony Blair has, for example, played an important role in placing the issue on the international policy agenda. But the commission has also pointed out that using existing knowledge for economic development will require governments and other players to focus on strengthening the role of the academic community (as well as business) in development.

Universities and other institutions of higher learning are key players in domesticating knowledge and diffusing it into the economy. But they can only do that through close linkages with the private sector. And that will require major adjustments in the way that universities function in Africa (as well as the rest of the developing world).

Many of these universities will need to be changed from being conventional sources of graduates to becoming engines of community development. In other words, they will need to become 'developmental universities', working directly in the communities they are located in.

The main role of the first generation of African universities was to create civil servants. Unfortunately, this classical model has become the template within which new universities are created, even though social and economic needs have changed radically.

The continent needs a new generation of universities that can serve as engines of both community development and social renewal.

The task ahead is not simply one of raising more funds. It will require deliberate efforts by governments, academia, business and civil society to reinvent higher education and put it to the service of the African people. To achieve this, a qualitative change in the goals, functions and structure of the university is needed.

As part of this process, fundamental reforms will be needed in curriculum design, teaching, location, choice of students and the management of the continent's universities. Such an effort will push African leaders to the frontiers of institutional innovation; nothing less will meet the challenges.

The good news is that Africa has a large number of important innovations in higher education to learn from, many of which are from the continent itself, or elsewhere in the developing world.

Take, for example, curriculum development. One of the most pioneering examples in curriculum reform is EARTH University in Costa Rica, whose curriculum is designed to match the realities of agribusiness, and is therefore able to dedicate itself to producing a new generation of young people trained specifically to focus on changing the human condition through entrepreneurial activities.

In South Africa, Stellenbosch University was the first teaching institution in the world to design and launch a satellite. The project focused on designing a curriculum intended to help solve specific problems such as developing new products or improving the environment, and not to simply produce graduates.

Africa's reconstruction challenges require creating the technical competence needed to design and manage infrastructure projects. The Kigali Institute of Science, Technology and Management (KIST) in Rwanda shows how higher education institutions can help transform the communities in which they are located.

In another shining example of business 'incubation' is the University of Zambia. This was the midwife of Zamnet, the country's largest Internet provider. Zambia's experience demonstrates that universities have great potential for creativity and innovation, even under the most difficult financial conditions. Numerous Brazilian universities have adopted a similar approach as part of their regular mission.

In Uganda, Makerere University has developed a new approach to teaching that enables students to contribute significantly to the solution of public health problems in their communities. Several other African universities are involved in similar social outreach activities.

Many of these examples are a result of isolated initiatives, some resulting from government foresight, others from occasional academic entrepreneurship, or just serendipity. The challenge facing Africa is to move away from relying on luck and tenacity, and to create an environment that helps to realise the developmental role of universities across the continent.

This must start with government policy. Little will happen unless governments realise the strategic role that universities can play in harnessing the world's fund of scientific and technological knowledge for development.

The issue is not simply about more funding, but also involves redefining higher education as a developmental force. This will require efforts to align university activities with development missions. This in turn will influence the location of universities.

Countries such as Kenya and Tanzania, for example, depend heavily on tourism to earn foreign exchange. Given this, there is a strong case for creating institutions of higher learning that are devoted to wildlife management and are located appropriately.

The sustainable management of freshwater resources - such as those of Lake Victoria - requires similarly dedicated institutions of higher learning.

The way ahead involves at least three types of strategic decisions. The first is to promote reform in existing universities, in order to bring the research, training and outreach activities to the service of the regions they are located in.

Most of the universities located in urban areas, for example, should forge close links with municipal authorities, and help solve the economic, social and environmental challenges that these authorities face.

Existing universities can also play an important role in promoting infrastructure development. Road and construction, for example, can benefit from local research results. Countries such as Malaysia have established a long tradition of linking road construction to the creation of civil engineering capacities at local universities.

The second type of decision involves upgrading the level of academic competence at technical institutions that have already contributed to community development, while preserving their traditional role.

This, however, is only possible if existing university policies and regulations are sufficiently flexible to accommodate developmental functions. Many are not; as a result, such upgrades have often been carried out at the expense of community service.

Finally, African governments are currently reviewing an increasing number of applications to set up new universities. This gives them a unique opportunity to shape the curricula, teaching and location of these institutions so they can perform developmental tasks.

Putting universities at the service of community development will also require extensive international partnerships. The implementation of the recommendations of the Commission for Africa is only a starting point. Development agencies such as the World Bank and their bilateral partners will need to complement their current focus on primary education with a new vision for higher education.

African countries, in turn, will need to demonstrate their commitment to long-term development by providing incentives and formulating policies that bring higher education to the service of development. Today the poor flock to the cities, many in search of the higher education that they see as the passport to their children's personal success.

The time has come for higher education to go to the poor, and to demonstrate that it is not only individuals, but also communities - and indeed nations - that will prosper as a result.

*Calestous Juma is professor of the practice of international development at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and lead co-author of Innovation: Applying knowledge in development, the report of the Task Force on Science, Technology and Innovation of the Millennium Project commissioned by UN secretary general Kofi Annan.*

## **Paul Zeleza: Beyond Afropessimism**

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

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

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

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

It was also in Egypt, one of the earliest centers of Christianity in the world, that monasteries first developed in the third century A.D. Tens of thousands of Christians gathered in the monasteries in the desert not only to escape the exactions of Roman rule, but also for a life devoted to spiritual contemplation. The monasteries and the monastic orders that regulated them provided important spaces for reflection, writing, and learning. The idea and institution of monasteries spread to other parts of Africa,

and elsewhere in the world as far as Britain and Georgia in Europe and Persia and India in Asia, out of which some universities later developed.

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

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

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

Missionaries – both European and African including those from the diaspora – initially undertook the introduction of Africa's “western” style universities. The process was largely concentrated in the expanding European settler colonies of South Africa and Algeria, and in Sierra Leone and Liberia newly established colonies for

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

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

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

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

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

The first colonial university college in Northern Africa was the Gordon Memorial College founded in the Sudan in 1902, renamed Khartoum University College in 1951 and Khartoum University at independence in 1956. A decade later, in 1912, the Islamic Institute was founded; it became a college in 1924 and was renamed the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Across Africa the growth in higher education after independence was nothing short of phenomenal. The new states embarked on ambitious development programs in which universities were seen as central for training a highly skilled labor force, creating and reproducing a national elite, and enhancing national prestige. The new national universities were quite diverse and flexible in their structures and models. On the

whole, they were much larger in size than their colonial predecessors, broader in their missions, and they expanded their disciplinary and curricula offerings from the arts and social sciences to include professional fields of study such as business, medicine and engineering, and they incorporated graduate programs.

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

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

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

Thus from the 1980s even as the number of colleges and universities continued to expand, it became increasingly evident that the higher education system in many countries was in crisis, which was expressed in declining state funding, falling

instructional standards, poorly equipped libraries and laboratories, shrinking wages and faculty morale. Academics increasingly resorted to consultancies or they became part of the “brain drain” as they sought refuge in other sectors at home or universities abroad. The costs on teaching, research, and Africa’s capacity to produce highly skilled human capital were predictably high.

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

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

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

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

and how those knowledges are disseminated and consumed by students, scholarly communities, and the wider public.

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

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

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

## **Mongomme Alpheus Masoga: Challenges of African Indigenous Knowledge**

### **1. Background/Discourse?**

I write this paper keeping in mind the tension that exists in the debate on Indigenous Knowledge (Systems) (IK(S)). I am tempted to relate instances around Indigenous Knowledge scholarship.

The first is an interesting exchange that I had with a medical doctor. This specific exchange took place at the Johannesburg International Airport two years ago. He (the said medical doctor) was interested in the papers I was reading that contained discussions on the passed Traditional Health Practitioners' Bill. He strongly felt that the bill would not be highly regarded by the medical profession. In my response I indicated how Indigenous Knowledge brought up lively discussions and debates on knowledge formations, generations, analysis, interpretation, representation, etc. In this regard we mentioned the fact that the contemporary situation sets out an interesting space and field of knowledge science. Arguably so, boundaries have shifted and are continuing to shift. This is the first challenge we all have to face. As Nel (2005: 11) points out,

[o]n the shelves of the emporium of academic methodologies, IK may have a less marketed and marketable position, but that might be its strength. Its strength is not its finality and conclusive product results, but lies in the ever-shifting probing of current realities of paraded clear-cut answers in order to measure their value in terms of their advancing a humanity and civility in harmony with the environment and the supernatural (spiritual). It will occupy the liminal space of initiation, for it will constantly be divorced from the familiar to create the uneasiness of the unbelievable. To share, to borrow, to adopt, to co-develop and to be influenced are in themselves not measures of colonization, for the aim is not dominance or subjugation.

The second is a challenge that was posed by Professor Tinyiko Maluleke at the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Linguistic, Languages, Religious and Cultural Communities (CRL)'s Africa Human Rights Day (unpublished speech, 16 October 2005). In his address, Maluleke indicated the fact that he supports all scientific and academic efforts around Indigenous Knowledge but wondered whether Indigenous Communities Rights are central to all these efforts. Maluleke's challenge sparked something in me and the research I have done so far. I came to the conclusion that all debates on beneficiating, benefit sharing, models of sharing, intellectual property and protection etc, are generated and defined from the 'pie in the sky' realities and are in no way close to the heart and soul of the indigenous people themselves. One is tempted to take Maluleke's challenge further. While one talks about indigenous peoples questions need to be asked:

- Who is indigenous and who is not?
- How do we define indigeneity?

- Who should do the defining?

Every humanity has some indigeneity – whether conscious or unconscious. It behoves all humanity to redefine and reflect on its indigenous roots – black, yellow or white. One does not align himself with the ‘radicalization’ in terms of the indigenous knowledge politics. The Indigenous Knowledge Systems of South Africa (iIKSSA Trust) *et al.* adopted the following definition for IKS: Emanating from the human spirit are life experiences organized and ordered into accumulated knowledge with the objective to utilize it to the quality of life and to create a liveable environment for both human and other forms of life (Masoga 2005: 22). This definition is ‘useful in defining local knowledge in the context of utilitarian and creative force for the sake, or rather with the objective, of ensuring that IK provides comprehensive well-being for both humans and other forms of life’ (Masoga 2005: 22).

Obviously one introduces deep questions of politics of knowledge and rights of people. It should be noted that these questions are central in taking the debate further. One cannot ignore the racism and propensities of exclusion to this whole debate. For instance, are whites indigenous and if so, does this then imply that they have indigenous knowledge systems? One is relieved that so far there is consensus that various South African communities have Indigenous Knowledge Systems. One is reminded of the *mampoer, potjiekos, tho tho tho, mbamba, diketo* (South African indigenous beer types) and so forth.

Thirdly, recently at the launch of the special book that contains essays from the Colloquium of Indigenous Knowledge Systems held at the University of the Free State from the 28 February to 3 March 2004 (Nel 2005) it became clear that knowledge practice and experience have taken a different turn altogether. Expressions like academic disobedience were mentioned in a warning. Academics and scientists who abuse and misuse the course of Indigenous Knowledge scholarship were called to order. Perhaps as a way of drawing these anecdotes to a close one can share interactions with Ms Grace Masuku at the University of South Africa’s Human Ecology Workshop on IK and Food Security, held in Pretoria, July 2005. Masuku, who presented her keynote address to the workshop, emphasized the fact that Indigenous Knowledge lives and sustains life in various communities (*IKS Our Way of Life*, 23 July 2005). Her presentation employed a number of life representations taken from day to day life encounters, while driving home the message that *there is another way to life and it works* (my emphasis). It behoves one to understand what this (other) *way of life* is all about. What sustains this life that Masuku is talks about? Serote (IKSSA Trust Meeting, 14 March 2004), interestingly mentioned a very important Setswana proverb that could resonate in other (South) African communities: *Phokoje go tshela yo o dithetsenyana*, meaning ‘a jackal that survives is the one that has plans’ (meticulous plans). This shows how communities in the pre-colonial era survived. One has to take into account the challenges that range from education, medicine, games, philosophy, governance, training and development, physics, social issues and also included are issues of culture and musical arts education. etc. All these systems were carried out in an organized fashion to sustain such communities. This, therefore, challenges one to have a different understanding of the world and life of pre- colonial communities. Such communities lived and

survived. Our existence indicates this tenacity as demonstrated in the lives of pre-colonial communities.

Fourth, it is worth mentioning the tension that exists between the two knowledge paradigms, namely exogenous and indigenous knowledges and the extent of the effect of these knowledge patterns on the knowledge generation in this century. As Raymond Sutter indicated in his paper presented during the occasion of the Harold Wolpe Memorial Lecture in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, (1-3 December 2005) respectively, presented by Raymond Suttner entitled: *Talking to the Ancestors: National Heritage, the Freedom Charter and nation-building in South Africa in South Africa*, points out that:

there are many forms of indigenous knowledge and these cannot be easily contained within systems because they interact with other knowledges, indigenous and non-indigenous. In fact the debate around knowledge, which is part of our heritage, is also often framed within a notion of a dichotomy between what is science and that which is indigenous. The assumption is that notions of science are universal and what is local is necessarily unscientific and one takes note of it very much as an anthropological curiosity, often frozen in time. This is not something engendered purely by the local Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) specialists amongst the African community.

Surely, no one denies the fact that Indigenous Knowledge has come and occupied a privileged position in terms of discussions about how development can 'best be brought about so that finally, it really is in the interests of the poor and the marginalized' (Agrawal 2002: 287). The question of *scientization* becomes central. One takes note of issues and debates raised in Sutter's paper about *things* scientific and *things* unscientific. What then should become or is science? Agrawal's views that, '[o]nly the forms of indigenous knowledge that are potentially relevant to development, then, need attention and protection. Other forms of such knowledge, precisely because they are irrelevant to the needs should be seriously interrogated.

It becomes important critical to consider the following question: Who determines the relevance and irrelevance of knowledge systems and by what principles are they guided? What becomes worth noting is the proposed process of *scientization* as articulated by Agrawal. He (Agrawal 2002: 290) proposes that, first, the identification and separation of 'useful knowledge the process of *particularization*'. This is termed the crucial and necessary step in this process of scientization. Second, the testing and validation process within the broad process by making use of the 'criteria deemed appropriate by science'. As Agrawal (2002:

290) indicates, '[t]hese scientific criteria are integral to any particularized statement about indigenous practices being considered knowledge'. The third step in this process is *generalization*, thereby making knowledge system/s 'really useful for development' (2002: 291). For Agrawal, the '[s]cientization of indigenous knowledge helps it emerge as fact'. It becomes difficult to relate facts and non-facts. This assumes issues of knowledge power.

Who has the prerogative to determine knowledge facts; truths, etc. and on what basis

are these carried out? The whole state of affairs point to issues and debates on knowledge tension and struggle. As Payle and Lebakeng (2004: 296) rightly ask that 'if indigenous knowledge systems hold the key to sustainable development, why was this opportunity not exploited earlier?' Payle and Lebakeng also mention that the answer 'is to be found in the nature and dominance of Western science in knowledge production' (2004: 296). The current century is the century of self-discovery and self-assertion, despite the cold and subtle wars and tensions that continue around the world, including the African continent. The time of re-awakening and rejuvenation cannot exclude the re-awakening of knowledge. One does not claim that the process has unfolded optimally, but simply notes the positive move to acknowledge the damage to indigenous knowledge. This implies that Africa, particularly South Africa, experienced a period of knowledge paralysis, the impact of which went as far as forcing to denigrate who they are and ignore the 'baggage' that brought them into contention with exogenous knowledge systems. This paralysis retarded the progress of African *scientization* and allowed exogenous theoretical and methodological frames to triumph. In the course of the knowledge paralysis, some 'mind-boggling' knowledge systems (scientifically) were pirated by the dominant knowledge systems and flourished at the expense of the knowledge stolen from the peripheral communities.

An example that is worth mentioning in this regard, is the South African beer brewing business (commonly known as sorghum beer). History makes it clear that during the forced removals and cheap labor (which was enforced socially, politically and economically) of the apartheid era, which resulted in the establishment of 'townships' such as Soweto (for South Western Township), a number of African women accompanied their husbands to areas of congregation designed by their apartheid masters. These women remained at home in dwellings the size of 'matchboxes' while their husbands worked in mines without insurance or any means of protection. One of the women's ideas for supplementing their husbands' incomes was to brew beer, which was sold around the mines and market places and even from their homes. It should be noted that the knowledge of brewing beer (the scientific thinking and procedure) came from their grandmothers and mothers in the backgrounds in which they had been brought up. This knowledge was turned into a technology, as science became a scientific tool. Given this type of background and the economic importance of this thriving knowledge, the users and controllers of the dominant exogenous knowledge began to 'pirate' indigenous knowledge. There was a move to sabotage the industry by outlawing the sale of home-brewed beer. Anyone found selling and marketing such products (mostly women) were placed in police custody. Surprisingly, some years later 'formal industries' were established to further the same business activity, taking it from the local practitioners. The 'formal industries' 'improved' their technology, but the knowledge remained the same. The fact remains, and will do for centuries to come, that this is stolen knowledge.

The fifth and last is the general view that misleads discussions and debates on Indigenous Knowledge to be only about traditional healing and practices. Currently a number of gatherings on IK are usually dominated by a strong delegation of traditional healers. This could mislead and misguide to mean that IK is only about

healing. On the contrary, healing forms a miniscule part of a wider system of meaning. The challenge rests with pioneers of IK philosophy and theory to unpack the meaning and practice of IK. The challenge goes as far as including issues of culture and musical arts education.

## **2. Indigenous Knowledge (Systems) in Perspective**

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) has been termed in different ways. These include traditional, cultural, local, community knowledge, etc. All these are interlinked and imply that IK is a body of 'knowledge' owned by local people in their specific communities and passed on from generation to generation. Indigenous Knowledge is, therefore, that knowledge which is known to a group of people or is embedded in a community. It could be rural or urban. The term 'embedded' is used in the general sense of 'knowledge' being around when needed by the people themselves. A considerable part of IK is related to the survival of the community, in general or specific fields, such as protection and use of the local environment, enhancing food security, especially during periods of stress. Some of this knowledge brings pleasure, reinforces tradition and belief systems and gives a sense of belonging and relatedness. The stock of knowledge is part of the culture or way of life of a people or community.

The term 'indigenous knowledge' is used synonymously with 'traditional', 'cultural' and 'local' knowledge, to differentiate knowledge developed by a given community from the international knowledge system sometimes also called 'Western' or 'modern' system generated through universities, government research centres and private industry. IK refers to the knowledge of indigenous peoples as well as any other defined community.

### ***2.1 The Case for Indigenous Knowledge Relevant for Sustainable Community Livelihoods***

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) provides the basis for problem-solving strategies for local communities, especially the rural and urban poor. It represents an important component of global knowledge on development issues. IK is an under-utilized resource in the development process. Learning from IK, by investigating first what local communities know and have, can improve understanding of local conditions and provide a productive context for activities designed to help communities. Understanding IK can increase responsiveness to clients. Adapting international practices to the local setting can help improve the impact and sustainability of development assistance. Sharing IK within and across communities can help enhance cross-cultural understanding and promote the cultural dimension of development.

Studies in various parts of the continent show that the majority of Africans including in South Africa, still depend largely on Indigenous Knowledge for survival. Without this knowledge many African communities would simply not be able to survive. African Indigenous Knowledge is still an important tool for sustainable development. It is applicable in a range of areas and site-specific situations. It is still relatively abundant in various communities in Southern Africa and the continent at large, and is taken for granted in most places. Millions of Africans, particularly those living in arid and semi-arid areas such as the San, Batswana, Masai, Tuareg, etc., would not have survived if it had not been for their IK. Formally, however, IK is underestimated and

under-valued for various reasons. These include:

- Demolition of local African cultures by westernization
- A prevailing colonial mentality
- Increasing control by government
- An institutional framework that is heavily tilted against creativity, diversity and promotion of African local knowledge systems
- A bureaucratic system that is lured to accepting and promoting the modern, scientific packages from the west. The catch with this approach is dependency, debts and great disparity in development
- The culling of IK by those outside the system for financial gain.

## ***2.2 The Co-existence of Indigenous Knowledge and Modern Western Knowledge Systems***

Indigenous Knowledge and modern western knowledge co-exist. In the formal world of development in South Africa and other African countries, a few of its people, and the majority of institutions and professionals, incline towards the modern/western scientific knowledge systems. The majority of people, however, even if they have attended school, depend on indigenous knowledge for their livelihood to a very large extent including knowledge related to food and nutrition, shelter and the use of natural resources. What comes to mind are issues of making of indigenous musical instruments – xylophones, reed pipes, drums, foot and hand rattles etc.

## ***2.3 African Indigenous Knowledge in the School Curriculum***

For indigenous knowledge to have significant bearing on sustainable development African societies it must gain some currency in schools, the social institution officially chartered to organize learning, certify knowledge and train the next generation of citizens. And yet across the continent, education has been the sector least likely to embrace Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) or to regard indigenous science as a legitimate source of inspiration for the youth and local communities development.

Studies in various parts of the world, including Africa, show that there is a growing recognition of the value of indigenous knowledge for sustainable development. It is therefore culturally and educationally appropriate to sustain and promote African indigenous knowledge in local communities through integrating it into the school curriculum. Indigenous knowledge could help to enhance the existing western-oriented school curriculum in the following ways:

### ***2.3.1. Learning Attitudes and Values for the Sustainable Future of Africa***

Indigenous communities have lived in harmony with the environment and have utilized resources without impairing nature's capacity to regenerate them. Their ways of living were sustainable. Indigenous knowledge shaped their values and attitudes towards environment, and there are the attitudes and values, which have guided their actions and made them sustainable. Therefore, indigenous knowledge can help to develop sensitive and caring values and attitudes and, thereby, promote a vision of a sustainable future. Indigenous knowledge systems are for life and come out of life and look at life comprehensively (Masoga 2005: 22). Sustainability in this regard points to teaching and shaping the mind of the young in terms of dance performances,

drumming skills, poetic gifts, could be used to ensure continuity in terms learning attitudes and transmitting values for the sustainable future for Africa.

### ***2.3.2 Learning through Culture***

Indigenous knowledge is stored in culture in various forms, such as traditions, customs, folk stories, folk songs, folk dramas, legends, proverbs, myths, etc. Use of these cultural items as resources in schools can be very effective in bringing indigenous knowledge alive for the students. It would allow them to conceptualize places and issues not only in the local area but also beyond their immediate experience. Students will already be familiar with some aspects of indigenous culture and, therefore, may find it interesting to learn more about it through these cultural forms. It would also enable active participation as teachers could involve students in collecting folk stories, folk songs, legends, proverbs, etc., that are retold in their community.

### ***2.3.3 Learning across generations***

In view of its potential value for sustainable development, it is necessary to preserve indigenous knowledge for the benefit of future generations. Perhaps the best way to preserve indigenous knowledge would be the integration of indigenous knowledge into the school curriculum. This would encourage learners to learn from their parents, grandparents and other adults in the community, and to appreciate and respect their knowledge. Such a relationship between young and older generations could help to mitigate the generation gap and help develop intergenerational harmony. Indigenous people, for the first time perhaps, would also get an opportunity to participate in curriculum development. The integration of indigenous knowledge into school curriculum would thus enable schools to act as agencies for transferring the culture of the society from one generation to the next. The following songs by the *Maila go Fenywa* performance group are instructive in this regard:

*Mbeki! Mbeki ge o e tla Lebowa o boditše mang? (x2)*

*Thabo Mbeki o boditše mang? (x2)*

*Ge o eya lebowa o boditše mang? (x2)*

#### Translated

Mbeki! Mbeki whom did you inform when you came here in Lebowa?

Thabo Mbeki, whom did you inform? (x2)

When you came to Lebowa whom did you inform? (x2)

The background to the song is that, I have an intention that if I get the opportunity to meet with President Thabo Mbeki I will certainly relate to him my complaints. I have complaints, you know. Mr Thabo Mbeki is our leader (*ke mong wa naga ye ya rena*). We should be informed when he comes to our region and be able to go meet with him. *Ba a re fosešša batho ba* (they make a mistake by not telling us about the coming and going of President Thabo Mbeki. This is definitely our serious complaint (*ke sello sa rena se segolo*).

### ***2.3.4 Starting Locally: From the 'Known' to the 'Unknown'***

The philosophy of 'from the known to the unknown' should be adopted if education is to be effective. Therefore, it is wise to start with the knowledge about the local area which students are familiar with, and then gradually move to the knowledge about regional, national and global environments. Indigenous knowledge can play a significant role in education about the local area. In most societies, indigenous people have developed enormous volumes of knowledge over the centuries by directly interacting with the environment: knowledge about the soil, climate, water, forest, wildlife, minerals etc. This ready-made knowledge system could easily be used in education if appropriate measures are taken to tap the indigenous knowledge, which remains in the memory of local elderly people. For example: A song like *Mmangwane mpulele ke nelwa ke pula* (My aunt open for me, I am drenched from the rain). The song is sung repeatedly to help in terms of cognitive skilling and the understanding of socialization philosophy and practices in the community. All these are basically introduced to children to be able to understand why and how the community is organized.

### ***2.3.5 Learning Outside the Classroom***

Learners can learn much from fieldwork in the local area. This calls for some prior knowledge and understanding. For instance, to be able to understand the relationship between indigenous people, soils and plants, learners need to identify the plants and soil types in the local area. One way to get a preliminary knowledge of plants and soil types in the local environment is to consult indigenous people and invite them to teach your students in the field. Indigenous people may also be willing to show learners collections of artefacts and certain ceremonies and explain their significance and, where appropriate, share with them particular sites of special significance. Songs that deal with specific community rituals and ceremonies could be used to bring the school context within the community context.

## **2.4 Challenges for the Learning Environment**

Since the democratic elections in 1994, South Africa has been struggling to develop 'content standards' to define what learners should know and be able to do as they go through the school system and the post-apartheid educational system as a whole. 'Performance standards' have been developed for educators and administrators, and a set of 'quality school standards' have been put forward by the Department of Education to serve as a basis for accrediting schools. To the extent that these government standards are written for general use throughout the country, they do not always address some of the special issues that are of critical importance to schools in rural South Africa and Africa in general, particularly those serving African indigenous communities and learners.

The following standards are meant to suggest a way for schools and communities in South Africa and Africa at large, to examine the extent to which they are attending to the educational and cultural wellbeing of the learners in their care. These 'cultural and indigenous knowledge standards' are predicated on the belief that a firm grounding in the heritage language and culture indigenous to a particular place is a fundamental prerequisite for the development of culturally healthy African learners and communities associated with that place. Thus it is an essential ingredient for identifying the appropriate qualities and practices associated with culturally

responsive educators, curriculum and schools.

Many of the suggested standards are applicable to all South African learners and communities because they focus curricular attention on in-depth study of the surrounding physical and cultural environment in which the school is situated. It also recognizes the unique contribution that African indigenous people can make to such study as long-term inhabitants who have accumulated extensive specialized knowledge related to that environment.

The suggested standards have been drawn up in five educational sectors/areas, i.e. for students, educators, curriculum, schools, and communities. These 'cultural standards' provide guidelines against which schools and communities can examine what they are doing to attend to the cultural well-being of the young people they are responsible for nurturing to adulthood. While the government standards stipulate what learners should know and be able to do, the cultural standards are oriented more toward providing guidance on how to get them there in such a way that they become responsible, capable and whole human beings in the process. The emphasis is on fostering a strong connection between what learners experience in school and their lives out of school by providing opportunities for learners to engage in in-depth experiential learning in real-world contexts. By shifting the focus in the curriculum from teaching/learning about cultural heritage as another subject to teaching/learning through the local culture as a foundation for all education, it is intended that all forms of knowledge, ways of knowing and world views be recognized as equally valid, adaptable and complementary to one another in mutually beneficial ways.

The cultural standards outlined in this chapter are not intended to be inclusive, exclusive or conclusive, and thus should be reviewed and adapted to fit local needs. Each school, community and related education agency should consider which of these suggested standards are appropriate and which are not, and when necessary, develop additional cultural standards to accommodate local circumstances. Terms should be interpreted to fit local conventions, especially with reference to meanings associated with the definition of elder, tradition, spirituality, or anything relating to the use of the local language. Where differences of interpretation exist, they should be respected and accommodated to the maximum extent possible. The cultural standards are not intended to produce standardization, but rather to encourage schools to nurture and build upon the rich and varied cultural traditions that continue to be practiced in communities throughout South Africa and Africa at large.

Some of the multiple uses to which these cultural and indigenous knowledge standards may be put are as follows:

- They may be used as a basis for reviewing school or district-level goals, policies and practices with regard to the curriculum and pedagogy being implemented in each community or cultural area
- They may be used by a local community to examine the kind of home/family environment and parenting support systems that are provided for the upbringing of its children
- They may be used to devise locally appropriate ways to review learner and teacher performance as it relates to nurturing and practicing culturally-healthy behaviour, including serving as potential graduation requirements

for learners

- They may be used to strengthen the commitment to revitalizing the local language and culture and fostering the involvement of community elders as an educational resource
- They may be used to help teachers identify teaching practices that are adaptable to the cultural context in which they are teaching
- They may be used to guide the preparation and orientation of teachers in ways that help them attend to the cultural well-being of their learners
- They may serve as criteria against which to evaluate educational programs intended to address the cultural needs of learners
- They may be used to guide the formation of national and provincial government-level policies and regulations and the allocation of resources in support of equal educational opportunities.

#### 2.4.1 Standards for learners

One's attention is drawn to the commonly-heard song sung during the weddings in Limpopo, Ga-Sekhukhune. One of the lines is: *Maake ka maoto a makima le 'mpa tše koto hleng wa sega ge ke re o tshwana le segwaga* (Maake with big feet and big stomach, why are you laughing when I say you look like a frog). The song has a game kind of content and drills the message. Children enjoy this kind of a song because of its entertaining style and function. This song and other similar songs can be used to deal with challenges of standards for learners, in helping learners to deal with challenges facing them.

Learners who meet this standard are able to:

- Assume responsibility for their role in relation to the well-being of the cultural community and their life-long obligations as community members
- Recount their own genealogy and family history
- Acquire and pass on the traditions of their community through oral and written history
- Practice their traditional responsibilities to the surrounding environment
- Reflect through their own actions the critical role that the local heritage language plays in fostering a sense of who they are and how they understand the world around them
- Live a life in accordance with the cultural values and traditions of the local community and integrate them into their everyday behaviour
- Determine the place of their cultural community in the regional, state, national and international political and economic systems.

**Culturally knowledgeable learners are able to build on the knowledge and skills of the local cultural community as a foundation from which to achieve personal and academic success throughout life. Learners who use songs and dance performances are able to deal with life challenges with a positive attitude.**

Learners who meet this cultural standard are able to:

- Acquire insights from other cultures without diminishing the integrity of their own
- Make effective use of the knowledge, skills and ways of knowing from their own cultural traditions to learn about the larger world in which they live

- Make appropriate choices regarding the long-term consequences of their actions
- Identify appropriate forms of technology and anticipate the consequences of their use for improving the quality of life in the community.

**Culturally knowledgeable learners are able to actively participate in various cultural environments.**

Learners who meet this cultural standard are able to:

- Perform subsistence activities in ways that are appropriate to local cultural traditions
- Make constructive contributions to the governance of their community and the well-being of their family
- Attain a healthy lifestyle through which they are able to maintain their own social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being
- Enter into and function effectively in a variety of cultural settings.

**Culturally knowledgeable learners are able to engage effectively in learning activities that are based on traditional ways of knowing and learning.**

Learners who meet this cultural standard are able to:

- Acquire in-depth cultural knowledge through active participation and meaningful interaction with community elders
- Participate in and make constructive contributions to the learning activities associated with a traditional camp environment
- Interact with community elders in a loving and respectful way that demonstrate an appreciation of their role as culture-bearers and educators in the community
- Gather oral and written history information from the local community and provide an appropriate interpretation of its cultural meaning and significance
- Identify and utilize appropriate sources of cultural knowledge to find solutions to everyday problems
- Engage in a realistic self-assessment to identify strengths and needs and make appropriate decisions to enhance life skills.

**Culturally knowledgeable learners demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of interaction of all elements in the world around them.**

Learners who meet this cultural standard are able to:

- Recognize and build upon the inter-relationships that exist among the spiritual, natural and human realms in the world around them, as reflected in their own cultural traditions and beliefs as well as those of others
- Understand the ecology and geography of the bioregion they inhabit
- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between world view and the way knowledge is formed and used
- Determine how ideas and concepts from one knowledge system relate to those derived from other knowledge systems
- Recognize how and why cultures change over time
- Anticipate the changes that occur when different cultural systems come in contact with one another

- Determine how cultural values and beliefs influence the interaction of people from different cultural backgrounds
- Identify and appreciate who they are and their place in the world.

#### **2.4.2 Challenges for educators**

##### **Culturally responsive educators incorporate local ways of knowing and teaching in their work.**

Educators who meet this cultural standard:

- Recognize the validity and integrity of the traditional knowledge system
- Utilize community elders' expertise in multiple ways in their teaching
- Provide opportunities and time for learners to learn in settings where local cultural knowledge and skills are naturally relevant
- Provide opportunities for learners to learn through observation and hands-on demonstration of cultural knowledge and skills
- Adhere to the cultural and intellectual property rights that pertain to all aspects of the local knowledge they are addressing
- Continually involve themselves in learning about the local culture.

##### **Culturally responsive educators use the local environment and community resources on a regular basis to link what they are teaching to the everyday lives of the learners.**

Educators who meet this cultural standard:

- Regularly engage learners in appropriate projects and experiential learning activities in the surrounding environment
- Utilize traditional settings such as camps as learning environments for transmitting both cultural and academic knowledge and skills
- Provide integrated learning activities organized around themes of local significance and across subject areas
- Are knowledgeable in all the areas of local history and cultural tradition that may have bearing on their work as a teacher, including the appropriate times for certain knowledge to be taught
- Seek to ground all teaching in a constructive process built on a local cultural foundation.

##### **Culturally responsive educators participate in community events and activities in an appropriate and supportive way.**

Educators who meet this cultural standard:

- Become active members of the community in which they teach and make positive and culturally-appropriate contributions to the well being of that community
- Exercise professional responsibilities in the context of local cultural traditions and expectations
- Maintain a close working relationship with and make appropriate use of the cultural and professional expertise of their co-workers from the local community.

##### **Culturally responsive educators work closely with parents to achieve a high level of complementary educational expectations between home and school.**

Educators who meet this cultural standard:

- Promote extensive community and parental interaction and involvement in their children's education
- Involve elders, parents and local leaders in all aspects of instructional planning and implementation
- Seek to continually learn about and build upon the cultural knowledge that students bring with them from their homes and community
- Seek to learn the local heritage language and promote its use in their teaching.

**Culturally responsive educators recognize the full educational potential of each learner and provide the challenges necessary for them to achieve that potential.**

Educators who meet this cultural standard:

- Recognize cultural differences as positive attributes around which to build appropriate educational experiences
- Provide learning opportunities that help learners recognize the integrity of the knowledge they bring with them and use that knowledge as a springboard to new understandings
- Reinforce the learners' sense of cultural identity and place in the world
- Acquaint learners with the world beyond their home community in ways that expand their horizons while strengthening their own identities
- Recognize the need for all people to understand the importance of learning about other cultures and appreciating what each has to offer.

#### **2.4 Cultural Standards for a Culturally Responsive Curriculum**

As for the case of a curriculum that meets the cultural standard, it should be able to:

- Recognize that all knowledge is imbedded in a larger system of cultural beliefs, values and practices, each with its own integrity and interconnectedness
- Insure that learners acquire not only the surface knowledge of their culture, but are also well grounded in the deeper aspects of the associated beliefs and practices
- Incorporate contemporary adaptations along with the historical and traditional aspects of the local culture
- Respect and validate knowledge that has been derived from a variety of cultural traditions
- Provide opportunities for learners to study all subjects starting from a base in the local knowledge system.

**Such a culturally responsive curriculum recognizes cultural knowledge as part of a living and constantly adapting system that is grounded in the past, but continues to grow through the present and into the future.**

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

- Recognizes the contemporary validity of much of the traditional cultural knowledge, values and beliefs, and grounds learners learning in the principles and practices associated with that knowledge
- Provides learners with an understanding of the dynamics of cultural systems as they change over time, and as they are impacted by external

forces

- Incorporates the in-depth study of unique elements of contemporary life in African local communities in South Africa and Africa at large.

Further, a culturally responsive curriculum uses the local language and cultural knowledge as a foundation for the rest of the curriculum.

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

- Utilizes the local language as a base from which to learn the deeper meanings of the local cultural knowledge, values, beliefs and practices
- Recognizes the depth of knowledge that is associated with the long inhabitation of a particular place and utilizes the study of 'place' as a basis for the comparative analysis of contemporary social, political and economic systems
- Incorporates language and cultural immersion experiences wherever in-depth cultural understanding is necessary
- Views all community members as potential teachers and all events in the community as potential learning opportunities
- Treats local cultural knowledge as a means to acquire the conventional curriculum content as outlined in state standards, as well as an end in itself
- Makes appropriate use of modern tools and technology to help document and transmit traditional cultural knowledge
- Is sensitive to traditional cultural protocol, including role of spirituality, as it relates to appropriate uses of local knowledge.

**A culturally responsive curriculum fosters a complementary relationship across knowledge derived from diverse knowledge systems.**

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

- Draws parallels between knowledge derived from oral tradition and that derived from books
- Engages learners in the construction of new knowledge and understandings that contribute to an ever-expanding view of the world.

**A culturally responsive curriculum situates local knowledge and actions in a global context.**

A curriculum that meets this cultural standard:

- Encourages learners to consider the inter-relationship between their local circumstances and the global community
- Conveys to learners that every culture and community contributes to, and at the same time receives from, the global knowledge base
- Prepares learners to 'think globally, act locally'.

### **3. Challenges for schools**

It becomes critical that a culturally responsive school should foster the on-going participation of community elders in all aspects of the schooling process. Such a school should

- Strive to maintain multiple avenues for community elders to interact

- formally and informally with learners at all times
- Provide opportunities for learners to regularly engage in the documenting of community elders' cultural knowledge and produce appropriate print and multimedia materials that share this knowledge with others
- Include explicit statements regarding the cultural values that are fostered in the community and integrate those values in all aspects of the school programme and operation
- Utilize educational models that are grounded in the traditional world view and ways of knowing associated with the cultural knowledge system reflected in the community.

The following become pertinent for such a school to meet the cultural standard. It:

- Utilizes a broad range of culturally-appropriate performance standards to assess student knowledge and skills
- Encourages and supports experientially oriented approaches to education that makes extensive use of community-based resources and expertise;
- Provides cultural and language immersion programs in which students acquire in-depth understanding of the culture of which they are members
- Helps learners develop the capacity to assess their own strengths and weaknesses and make appropriate decisions based on such a self-assessment.

**A culturally responsive school provides opportunities for learners to learn in, and or about their heritage language.**

A school that meets this cultural standard:

- Provides language immersion opportunities for learners who wish to learn in their heritage language
- Offers courses that acquaint all learners with the heritage language of the local community
- Makes available reading materials and courses through which learners can acquire literacy in the heritage language
- Provides opportunities for teachers to gain familiarity with the heritage language of the learners they teach through summer immersion experiences.

**A culturally responsive school has a high level of involvement of professional staff that is of the same cultural background as the learners with whom they are working.**

A school that meets this cultural standard:

- Encourages and supports the professional development of local personnel to assume teaching and administrative roles in the school
- Recruits and hires teachers whose background is similar to that of the learners they will be teaching
- Provides a cultural orientation camp and mentoring programme for new teachers to learn about and adjust to the cultural expectations and practices of the community and school
- Fosters and supports opportunities for teachers to participate in

professional activities and associations that help them expand their repertoire of cultural knowledge and pedagogical skills.

**A culturally responsive school consists of facilities that are compatible with the community environment in which they are situated.**

A school that meets this cultural standard:

- Provides a physical environment that is inviting and readily accessible for local people to enter and utilize
- Makes use of facilities throughout the community to demonstrate that education is a community-wide process involving everyone as teachers
- Utilizes local expertise, including students, to provide culturally-appropriate displays of arts, crafts and other forms of decoration and space design.

**A culturally responsive school fosters extensive on-going participation, communication and interaction between school and community personnel.**

A school that meets this cultural standard:

- Holds regular formal and informal events bringing together learners, parents, teachers and other school and community personnel to review, evaluate and plan the educational programme that is being offered
- Provides regular opportunities for local and regional board deliberations and decision-making on policy, programme and personnel issues related to the school
- Sponsors on-going activities and events in the school and community that celebrate and provide opportunities for learners to put into practice and display their knowledge of local cultural traditions.

#### **4. Challenges for Cultural Standards for Communities**

**A culturally-supportive community incorporates the practice of local cultural traditions in its everyday affairs.**

A community that meets this cultural standard:

- Provides respected community elders with a place of honour in community functions
- Models culturally-appropriate behaviour in the day-to-day life of the community
- Utilizes traditional child-rearing and parenting practices that reinforce a sense of identity and belonging
- Organizes and encourages participation of members from all ages in regular community-wide, family-oriented events
- Incorporates and reinforces traditional cultural values and beliefs in all formal and informal community functions.

**A culturally-supportive community nurtures the use of the local heritage language.**

A community that meets this cultural standard:

- Recognizes the role that language plays in conveying the deeper aspects of cultural knowledge and traditions
- Sponsors local heritage language immersion opportunities for young children when they are at the critical age for language learning

- Encourages the use of the local heritage language whenever possible in the everyday affairs of the community, including meetings, cultural events, print materials and broadcast media
- Assists in the preparation of curriculum resource material in the local heritage language for use in the school
- Provides simultaneous translation services for public meetings where persons unfamiliar with the local heritage language are participants.

**A culturally supportive community takes an active role in the education of all its members.**

A community that meets this cultural standard:

- Encourages broad-based participation of parents in all aspects of their children's education, both in and out of school
- Insures active participation by community members in reviewing all local, regional and state initiatives that have bearing on the education of their children
- Encourages and supports members of the local community who wish to pursue further education to assume teaching and administrative roles in the school
- Engages in subsistence activities, sponsors cultural camps and hosts community events that provide an opportunity for children to actively participate in and learn appropriate cultural values and behaviour
- Provides opportunities for all community members to acquire and practice the appropriate knowledge and skills associated with local cultural traditions.

**A culturally supportive community nurtures family responsibility, sense of belonging and cultural identity.**

A community that meets this cultural standard:

- Fosters cross-generational sharing of parenting and child-rearing practices
- Creates a supportive environment for the youth to participate in local affairs and acquire the skills to be contributing members of the community
- Adopts the adage, 'it takes the whole village to raise a child'.

**A culturally supportive community assists teachers in learning and utilizing local cultural traditions and practices.**

A community that meets this cultural standard:

- Sponsors a cultural orientation camp and community mentoring programme for new teachers to learn about and adjust to the cultural expectations and practices of the community
- Encourages teachers to make use of facilities and expertise in the community to demonstrate that education is a community-wide process involving everyone as teachers
- Sponsors regular community/school potlucks to celebrate the work of learners and teachers and to promote on-going interaction and communication between teachers and parents
- Attempts to articulate the cultural knowledge, values and beliefs that it

- wishes teachers to incorporate into the school curriculum
- Establishes a programme to insure the availability of elders' expertise in all aspects of the educational programme in the school.

**A culturally supportive community contributes to all aspects of curriculum design and implementation in the local school.**

A community that meets this cultural standard:

- Takes an active part in the development of the mission, goals and content of the local educational programme
- Promotes the active involvement of students with elders in the documentation and preservation of traditional knowledge through a variety of print and multimedia formats
- Facilitates teacher involvement in community activities and encourages the use of the local environment as a curricular resource
- Promotes parental involvement in all aspects of their children's educational experience.

**4.1. The Role of Educators**

Classroom teachers are responsible for drawing upon community elders and other cultural experts in the surrounding community to make sure all resource materials and learning activities are culturally accurate and appropriate. Teachers may increase their cultural responsiveness through the following actions:

- Learn how to use local ways of knowing and teaching to link the knowledge base of the school to that of the community; e.g. A commonly known song or game could be used as a starter in this regard
- Make effective use of local expertise, especially community elders, as co-teachers whenever local cultural knowledge is being addressed in the curriculum; e.g. When I started at primary school an elder in the community was engaged by the local school to help learners to do arts and craft that involved song and dance performance. I can still cherish that experience as it has left an indelible mark on me
- Take steps to recognize and validate all aspects of the knowledge students bring with them, and assist them in their on-going quest for personal and cultural affirmation; e.g. Learning has to take into account what learners know for example – names of cattle, colours of cattle, poetry composed in praise of cattle could be used in this regard
- Develop the observation and listening skills necessary to acquire an in-depth understanding of the knowledge system indigenous to the local community and apply that understanding in teaching practice; e.g. Local elders should be part and parcel of the integral part of learners' curriculum
- Make every effort to utilize locally relevant curriculum materials with which students can readily identify, including materials prepared by African indigenous authors; e.g. Songs and poems that are performed locally should be considered to add value to locally relevant curriculum materials to be used in schools. The following Sepedi rhyme recited by toddlers at the kindergarten becomes instructive in this regard: *Kgogo ela yaka ya bea lee – lee le le tee. Ka re ke yo le*

*tsea ya gana ya re gonna ontseela bana – bana baka* (That Chicken laid an egg – one egg. When I decided to take the egg it refused with it and said, ‘You take my children from me, my children’). Obviously there is a lot that comes out of this recited rhyme.

- Provide sufficient flexibility in scheduling elder participation so they are able to fully share what they know with minimal interference by the clock, and provide enough advance notice for them to make the necessary preparations.

## GLOSSARY

**Definition:** A description that shows how something is like others in that general category, but also shows how it is different or distinct from others in that group.

**Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools:** Guidelines developed for schools and communities to evaluate what they are doing to promote the cultural well-being of the young people whom they are responsible for educating.

**Associated royalties:** The share paid to an author or composer from the profits derived from the sale or performance or use of the author's creation in collaboration with other individuals or groups. A share paid to the creator for the right to use their invention or services.

**Authenticated:** Established as being genuine; proven to be the real thing.

**Author:** A person who creates or originates an idea or work; not limited to written creations.

**Biographical information:** Important information that summarizes a person's life and work. Generally it includes information on birth, ethnic heritage, cultural experiences, education, research, community activities or any other matters that would be of importance to the readers.

**Clearinghouse:** A location or group through which information or materials regarding a cultural group or groups is collected and distributed to others.

**Consent form:** A signed form granting permission for a person or entity to do research or other activities and indicating how the work will be performed or published.

**Copyright:** A form of legal protection for both published and unpublished 'original works of authorship' (including literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic and certain other intellectual works), in order that they cannot be reproduced without the copyright holders consent. Under current law, an individual or an organization usually holds copyright, though efforts are underway to address the issue of copyright protection for community-shared cultural property.

**Cultural accuracy:** Cultural information that is accepted by the members of a particular society as being an appropriate and accurate representation of that society.

**Cultural context:** The cultural setting or situation in which an idea, custom, skill or art was created and performed.

**Cultural experts:** Members of a particular society, with its own cultural tradition, who are recognized by the rest of the society as knowledgeable of the culture of that society, especially in the area of arts, beliefs, customs, organization and values.

**Cultural integrity:** In regards to research, the researcher is obliged to respect his or her informants and the information they provide so that it is presented to others in an accurate, sensitive and integrated manner.

**Cultural perspective:** The views generally accepted by elders and knowledgeable practitioners of a culture.

**Cultural responsibilities:** The responsibilities that members of a particular society with its own cultural system have to carry out to understand, promote, protect and perpetuate cultural information and practices such as language, art, social rules, values and beliefs, and they must do so in an honest and sincere manner.

**Culture:** A system of ideas and beliefs that can be seen in indigenous peoples' creations and activities, which over time, comes to characterize the people who share

in the system.

**Curriculum:** A course, or series of courses in an educational programme. It may include stories, legends, textbooks, materials and other types of resources for instruction.

**Culture bearers-in-residence:** A programme that involves elders in teaching and curriculum development in a formal educational setting (oftentimes a university), and is intended to impact the content of courses and the way the material is taught.

**Explicit recognition:** Contributors to materials or information provided by members of a cultural group must be openly and clearly indicated. This recognition should include their names, ethnic background, and contributions. A researcher should allow the contributors to review the information provided by them, prior to publication, to insure that it accurately reflects what they said or intended.

**Guidelines:** A set of rules, regulations or suggestions that are set out for those who are going to carry out some activity such as preparing curriculum, writing, reviewing, or organizing materials.

**Indigenous knowledge system:** The unified knowledge that originates from and is characteristic of a particular society and its culture.

**Informed consent:** Consent that is granted only after one understands all that the consent permits or prohibits and the implications and possible effects of granting that consent. Appropriate translation services need to be provided for persons to be truly 'informed' when more than one language is involved.

**Legal protection:** Protected by the laws of a government or society. Does not always have to be in written form (some Native laws are passed on through oral tradition and customary practice.)

**Manuscript:** A written document that may be presented to a publisher or others.

**Musical Arts Education:** The musical arts that take into account the educational development, engagement, review, structuring and so forth of music education. Music Arts education is an involved exercise and has a trans-disciplinary slant to it.

**Indigenous community member:** A member of an indigenous society, as distinguished from a stranger, immigrant, or others who are not considered full members of the indigenous society.

**Indigenous language specialist:** A speaker of a language who is recognized by other speakers of the language as being fluent in the language and has the ability to translate and interpret the language correctly.

**Password protected:** A method of protecting access to information; requiring a person to know a password to gain access to particular information.

**Placed-based education:** An educational programme that is firmly grounded in a community's unique physical, cultural and ecological system, including the language, knowledge, skills and stories that have been handed down through the generations.

**Public domain:** Something that is owned by the public and is free from any legal restriction, such as a copyright or patent.

**Public information:** Information which no longer belongs to an individual or group but has become public property and the general public is allowed to use it. Informants and/or members of a cultural group have a right to understand the use that will be made of their contributions before cultural knowledge is shared and allowed to become public information.

**Release form:** A signed form allowing the performance, sale, publication, use or

circulation of information or a creation. The conditions and future use of the information or creation must be clearly expressed and explained to the contributor prior to signing any release. This information should include copyright and trademark or other ownership rights.

**Repository:** A place where things are placed for safekeeping such as archives, libraries, museums.

**Sensitive cultural information:** Cultural information or details that are delicate in nature and not meant to be shared with the general public or those outside of that cultural group.

**Traditional names:** Names that have a history of being commonly used by indigenous and/or local communities; indigenous names are those derived from the language of the people who have inhabited the area for countless generations and are preserved in that language.

## REFERENCES

- Agrawal, A. (2002) 'Indigenous knowledge and the politics of classification'. In *ISSJ* 173. Oxford: UNESCO.
- Barsh, R.L. (2000) *Protecting Knowledge: Traditional Resource Rights in the New Millennium*. University of British Columbia: Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs.
- Battiste, M. and J.Y. Henderson (2000) *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge*. Saskatoon: Purich. .
- Brush, S. B., and D. Stabinsky (1996) *Valuing Local Knowledge: Indigenous People and Intellectual Property Rights*. Covelo, CA: Island Press.
- Ellerby, J. H. (2001) *Working with Aboriginal Elders: An Introductory Handbook for Institution-Based and Health Care Professionals Based on the Teachings of Aboriginal Elders and Cultural Teachers*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Native Studies Press, University of Manitoba.
- Greaves, T. (1994) *Intellectual Property Rights for Indigenous Peoples: A Source Book*. Oklahoma City: Society for Applied Anthropology.
- Johnson, M. (1992) *Lore: Capturing Traditional Environmental Knowledge*. Hay River, NWT, Canada: Dene Cultural Institute.
- King, T. F. (1998) *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice: An Introductory Guide*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Masoga, M.A. (2003) 'Establishing dialogue: thoughts on music education in Africa'. In *Alternation*, 10 (2): 334–337.
- Masoga, M.A. (2005) 'South African research in indigenous knowledge systems and challenges for change'. In *Indilinga*, 4 (1): 15–29.
- Nel, P.J. (2005) 'Indigenous knowledge systems: contestation, rhetorics and space'. In *Indilinga*, 4(1): 2–14.
- Nketia, J.H. (1975). *The Music of Africa*. London: Gollancz.
- Ntuli, P.P. (2002) 'Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the African Renaissance'. In C.A. Odora-Hoppers (ed.) *Indigenous Knowledge and the Integration of Knowledge Systems: Towards a Philosophy of Articulation*. Claremont, South Africa: New Africa Books.
- Nzewi, M. (1997) *African Music: Theoretical Content and Creative Continuum: The Culture Exponent's Definitions*. Olderhausen, Germany: Institut fur Didaktik Populärer Musik.
- Nel, P.J. (2005) 'Indigenous knowledge systems: contestation, rhetorics and space'. In *Indilinga*, 4 (1): 2–14.
- Posey, D. A. and G. Duffield (1996) *Beyond Intellectual Property: Toward Traditional Resource Rights for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities*. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: International Development Research Centre.
- Royal, Te A. C. (1992) *Te Haurapa: An Introduction to Researching Tribal Histories and Traditions*. Wellington, New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books Ltd.
- Shiva, V. (1997) *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Between the Lines.
- Slapin, B., Seale, D., and R. Gonzales (1996) *How to Tell the Difference: A Guide to Evaluating Children's Books for Anti-Indian Bias*. Berkeley, CA: Oyate.
- Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*.

New York: Zed Books.

Special Issue (1991) 'Intellectual Property Rights: The Politics of Ownership'. In *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, 15 (3).

Task Force (1974) *A Guide to Textbook Evaluation*. Stanford, CA: Task Force for the Evaluation of Instructional Materials, California State Board of Education.

## Positions

### *Geri Augusto*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Melvin Ayogu**

A university in Africa is expected to be relevant; that is to actively engage with the issues facing society. In this Professor Juma is right in his call for universities in Africa to sign on to the 'new social contract'. Some scholars, Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1995) for example, argue that we are witnessing the transformation of the role of state in academia, the role of corporations in innovation and of the university in the economy.

The question for Africa therefore is not whether universities in Africa should be in the forefront of knowledge generation for solving Africa's development challenges. The issue in my mind is how to coordinate the potential and existing knowledge infrastructure and policy milieu in order to galvanize the generation of crucial knowledge. In fact, this idea is the analogue of the contention in the (foreign) aid front where donors are increasingly being tasked to coordinate their efforts both nationally and regionally to avoid parallel governments. Contemporary donor relations have been characterized by a myriad of donor-defined goals often at variance with each other and national priorities.

The relevance here is that African universities are expected to be more attuned to Africa's realities and hence should define the agenda around which the increasing opportunities for global networks coalesce, in effect, becoming centres that harness both human and technological resources within the opportunities offered in the global network.

To effectively harness the potential resources and define the agenda usefully, African universities must first become African; the physician must first heal herself. We must first establish the incentive for African universities to embed their activities in the development challenges of their environment?

### **Should there be particular characteristics for an African university?**

Clearly, universities in Africa ought to capitalize on the renewed interest in Africa's development challenges in the new millennium and define the agenda. It is not clear to me that the major drag is from universities and therefore that the reforms or reinvention necessarily has to occur within universities along the lines sketched by Juma. To my mind, that knowledge infrastructure already exists. It simply needs to be energized.

Following the wave of decolonization in the early 1960s and with the assistance of UNESCO, most countries in Africa embarked on building infrastructure for science and technology. Many African states established national mechanisms such as National Research Councils, Commissions of Science and Technology or Ministries of Science and Technology. At the national level, there are national councils of S&T, public research institutes that are focused on a given field or discipline, specific commodity research foundations (cocoa, tea, coffee), private sector and NGOs, and the universities (see the following tables).

Then there are regional and sub-regional organizations such as the African Academy of Sciences, the Committee on Natural Resources and Science and Technology and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa. Finally, the African Network of Scientific and Technological Institutions is a network of 98 institutions in 33 countries engaged in training and research in the fields of science and technology. This network encourages collaboration and promotes R&D in all areas of relevance to Africa's development.

My question is this: Are the proposed reforms put forward regardless of the existing infrastructure or because what we already have are not functioning as intended? If the existing set-up is not effective, would reinventing African universities wake up the people?

**Table 1: National R&D Agencies in Selected Countries**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Ghana	National Research Council
Kenya	National Council of Science and Technology
Nigeria	Ministry of Science and Technology
South Africa	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
Tanzania	Commission of Science and Technology
Uganda	National Council of Science and Technology

*Source: Author's survey*

**Table 2: Thematic Focus of Public Research Institutes in Kenya**

<i>Institute</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Ministry</i>
Kenya Agricultural Research Institute	Agricultural Sciences	Agriculture
Kenya Industrial Development Research Institute	Industrial Sciences	Industry
Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute	Marine and Natural Sciences	Fisheries
Kenya Medical Research Institute	Bio-Medical Sciences	Health
Kenya Trypanosomiasis Research Institute	Bio-Medical Sciences	Health

*Source: The Science and Technology Act (1980) Cap 250 laws of Kenya*

**Table 3: Thematic Focus of Public Research Institutes in South Africa**

<i>Institute</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Ministry</i>
National Research Foundation [NRF]	Arts and Science Research	Department of Science and Technology
Council for Scientific and Industrial Research [CSIR]	Industrial Sciences Research	Department of Science and Technology
National Advisory Council on Innovation	Science and Technology	Department of Science and Technology
Agricultural Research Council	Agricultural Research	Department of Agriculture
Council for Geosciences [CGS]	Geological Science Research	Department of Minerals and Energy [DME]
Council for Mineral Technology Research [Mintek]	Mineral and Metallurgy Research	DME
The South African Nuclear Energy Corporation [NECSA]	Nuclear Technology Research	DME
Onderstepoort Biological Products Ltd	Research and Vaccine Manufacture	Department of Agriculture

*Note: Data compiled from the Annual Reports (2001-2003) of the Departments of Agriculture, Transport, Minerals and Energy and the National Research Foundation (NRF) 2002/2003 Annual Report.*

**Table 4: Survey of National Research Centres by thematic focus – 1995**

	<i>Ghana</i>	<i>Kenya</i>	<i>Tanzania</i>	<i>South Africa</i>
Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries	9	14	19	30
Health & Nutrition	2	4	5	31
Energy, Geology & Mining	/	/	1	11
Manufacturing	3	4	3	21
Environment	3	2	1	6
Basic Sciences	/	1	/	17
Social & Human Sciences	5	3	4	37
Multidisciplinary	1	1	3	19
<i>Country Total</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>172</i>

*Source: Author's compilation from the World Science Report, 1998.*

*'/' means data not available*

### **Jane Bennett**

Calestous Juma's call towards the 're-invention of the African university' is explicit in its rejection of the colonial roots of most current institutions of higher education in African countries, grounded as these were in the interests of perpetuating colonial models and values of governance through a 'qualified' professional civil service. Juma argues for a reconceptualization of universities as 'engines of development', fundamentally oriented towards the challenges of in-depth interaction, with 'communities' engaging in addressing local concerns of (for example) health, housing, education, political participation, and interested more in complex, interactive partnership with those outside the borders of university-professionalism than in the production of graduates alone.

There is much that is attractive about Juma's position: the recognition that African contexts deserve universities deeply attuned to the production of knowledges that have local resonance and impact, the (low-key) acknowledgement that the colonial roots of African higher education institutions have not stood us in good stead, creating African-based scholars and researchers as constant 'poor cousins' of Northern theoreticians, and the call towards pedagogies and research methodologies which are created in negotiation with diverse localities as opposed to (often imagined) standards of academic norms generated in the North. The principle that knowledge processes generated within a university should offer tangible resources to those who are poor, disenfranchised or 'different', strikes one as key to an ethics of intellectual praxis.

There are however anxieties for me in the formulation of an invitation towards 're-invention' which suggests that African universities – differently from others – should be 'developmental'. The anxiety may be simply one of semantics: it does not take an expert in Walter Rodney to note that zones formally described as in need of 'development' are historically those whose 'under-development' can be analyzed as critical to the shape of dominant global economies. To suggest that African universities have a peculiarly 'developmental' set of responsibilities (as opposed to – say – Harvard University) is to risk re-inscribing African-based philosophers, scientists, poets and researchers into a relationship fundamentally oriented towards the interests of those who 'under-develop', those who name some zones rather than others as 'in urgent need of social problem resolution', and those who draw rigid, impenetrable, distinctions between the sophisticated dance of theory and the messy-but-worthy conversation of application.

When, in the late 1970s, the African-based community of researchers, universities and scientists were challenged to 're-invent' themselves by African feminists, this call was not made primarily in relation to issues of 'development'. While these feminists were explicitly in touch with the implications of gender inequalities for poverty, for agricultural production, for conflict, for health – and so on – the argument was not that universities in Africa needed radical transformation in order to 'develop' the nation/the local better. The arguments concerned epistemology. This paper briefly explores the range of arguments articulated between the 1980s and the 21st century, from African feminists, with a passionate interest in the 'reinvention of universities'. While engagement with those excluded by history and class from university space is certainly a powerful thread within these arguments, the stronger hortatory move involves asking questions about what it would take for a revolution in consciousness around the politics of

knowledge production to occur in such a way that universities could be imagined as spaces open to the possibilities of African citizenship undefined through (for example) ethnicity, gender or class.

The paper will argue that despite the strength of these arguments, current gender politics in African universities remain (despite affirmative action programmes, sexual harassment policies, or the appointment of senior women's leadership) complex cultures in which misogyny is intimately linked to intensive competition for resources, authority, and space. In the face of this (some recent research on gender and institutional culture in African universities will be drawn upon to substantiate the assertion), several interesting initiatives on the continent have been developed in order to 'reinvent' the African university through networks, incorporating live seminar-space, a range of virtual spaces, and number of different forms of both publication and teaching.

The conclusion of the paper will argue that the term 'development' is too dangerous to be drawn upon as a term through which to imagine different possibilities of knowledge generation, possibilities that may indeed encompass resolution of local deprivations. The African feminist work which will be (briefly) presented will suggest, rather, that notions of fluidity, multi-modal mobilities and bi/multi-literacies in terms of the meanings for teaching, production and intellectual alliances offer interesting ways of both conceptualizing – and living within – 'African university' terrain unconstrained by local walls but viscerally alert to the bricks and mortar of our days.

## **Anthony Bogues**

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

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

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

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

### **A project of peace and new political knowledge.**

In 1998, the Jamaican post-colony was wracked by violence. Some of it was criminal violence a partial consequence of the drug trafficking; another element was 'domestic' violence; and another was the consequence of what has been called, wrongly I think, 'tribal political violence'. All these elements congealed into making urban politics and daily life violent in many communities. In the late 1990s I was given the task of teaching and redeveloping a graduate course in Caribbean Politics. This was some 30-odd years after political independence. The course had been regularly taught in the department since political independence and the formation of faculty of social sciences in the 1960s. However, the intriguing thing about the course was that it stopped at the anti-colonial struggle. In other words, topics about, power, political culture and political leadership were all taught from the perspective of the formal political anti-colonial struggle. While this was an important and necessary foundation for the study of Caribbean politics it could not adequately explain the recurring feature of violence that had become a cause of

great societal concern. The challenge that I faced was how to teach post-colonial Caribbean politics. This in turn led to two things:

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

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

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

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

Many of the 15 students in that Masters graduate class have gone on to PhD work, some in political philosophy, others in comparative politics and others in public policy. A few

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

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

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

## ***Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan***

### **The University in Africa: A Perspective from Science**

Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) are essential for socio-economic development. More specifically, science-based solutions are needed in Africa for poverty alleviation, disease eradication, agricultural productivity, employment, wealth creation and sustainable development (Chinsamy-Turan, 2006). However, South Africa (like many other countries in Africa) faces critical shortage in human resources in Science. According to South Africa's Minister of Science and Technology, Mosibudi Mangena, 'the most significant challenge facing the Department of Science and Technology and the National System of Innovation is the rejuvenation of the face of Research' (DST, 2005). Thus, universities in Africa have a vital role to play in developing the next generation workforce in SET. However, this is easier said than done. The problems in Africa are multifaceted and interventions are needed at several different levels.

In South Africa, because of the legacy of apartheid, most tertiary institutions have an academic profile that is skewed towards white men with poor representation of black academics, the majority of whom are at lower ranks (ASSAf, 2004; SARG, 2004). The few women that are present in Science are likewise mainly employed at lower ranks (Chinsamy-Turan, 2003; SARG, 2004) and the majority are to be found in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SARG, 2004). Since 'talent has become the world's most sought after commodity' (Wooldrige, 2006), compounding the problem of demographic representation, South Africa and many other developing countries also face the problem of 'brain drain' (ASSAf, 2004). To counter this, it is imperative that universities in Africa and particularly governments in Africa think of creative ways to 'retain' the talent developed, for example through post-doctoral fellowships and job creation, and also develop strategies to 'woo back' the diaspora (in much the same way as China is currently doing; Economist, 2006).

I also believe that universities in Africa need to make better 'use' of their diaspora by encouraging them to engage in collaborative projects, and governments in Africa should lure the diaspora into applying their talents innovatively in Africa. The Africa Earth Observatory Network (AEON) fosters 'brain gain' by having developed a research agenda that considers big issues in science (such as global climate change), and provides an enabling environment for collaboration across disciplines and as well as between researchers based in Africa and elsewhere in the world. Another example of fostering inter-Africa research links is the University Science, Humanities, and Engineering Partnership in Africa (USHEPia) programme that partners eight African universities. Yet another example is the initiatives of the Academy of Science of South Africa that bring together scientists and social scientists to work on specific projects such as 'science for poverty alleviation' and 'nutritional influences on human immunity'.

One of the challenges UCT faces is to improve the numbers of black students that register for tertiary science education. However, in South Africa the pool from which universities draw science students is low – only about 3.5% of matriculants achieve matriculation exemption with maths and science on higher grade – and only a small fraction of these are

women and black people (DST, 2005). The poor quality of science education is a direct reflection of the critical shortage of competently trained science teachers in South Africa (ASSAf, 2004). UCT has realized that it needs to respond to these deficiencies at school level, and has recently developed a programme of intervention to raise the level of maths and science education in schools. This, the Mathematics and Science Education project (MSEP), involves a close cooperation between academics at UCT, teachers and learners.

The other problem at school level is that young black people have very few role models in science and it is therefore imperative that universities become actively engaged in promoting and stimulating interest in science and engineering. Much of this is already happening, for example members of our UCT science faculty are involved in 'workshops' at local schools, science festivals, etc. (Chinsamy-Turan, 2006). The media also plays a vital role in communicating and engaging the public in science. However, we recognize that there is a serious shortage of expertise in scientific journalism in South Africa; to respond to this need in our society, in 2007 a short science journalism course is going to be offered through UCT's Centre for Open Learning.

To be internationally competitive, I believe that it is important that universities in Africa not simply become 'developmental universities' or put 'in service to African people' as Calestous Juma describes (Juma, 2006). Although much scientific research in Africa should contribute to socio-economic upliftment, science in Africa also needs 'blue sky' research, i.e. research that has no practical day-to-day application (for example, astronomy, archaeology, paleontology, etc.), but is nevertheless important to the generation of scientific knowledge. Indeed, this is the strategy outlined in the Research and Development strategy of the Department of Science and Technology of South Africa and is echoed in the aims of the local National Research Foundation (NRF).

I also believe that it is important that universities align themselves to the national agenda in terms of skills development. For example, the South African Department of Labour has identified particular areas in which skills (so-called 'scarce skills') are required: engineering, veterinary science, actuarial science, bioinformatics, molecular biology, environmental science, etc. The NRF has responded to these identified needs by offering bursaries for students to study in these areas and it is important that universities ensure that training is available in these specified areas.

UCT prides itself in being a 'research-led' university that 'educates for life'. It is one of very few universities in Africa listed in the World University rankings of the Times Higher Education supplement. This listing testifies to the high standard of education and research at UCT. Although I therefore do not believe that UCT should 'reinvent' the curriculum as Juma (2006) states, the curriculum could perhaps be enhanced by making it more relevant by using local examples and case studies and, wherever possible, highlighting contributions made by indigenous people in the development of certain disciplines.

Despite the foreboding array of challenges that universities in Africa face, I believe that with the right opportunities and effective leadership, they have the potential to nurture and develop the skills and talents of the next generation of SET professionals who can make a real difference to society and to the advancement of science.

## **Brenda Cooper**

### ***African Studies and the Role of Universities in Africa***

*The question of Centres for African Studies within the continent itself is quite a complex one. Interestingly, a conference was convened by the Department of Education and hosted by the Minister, MP Naledi Pandor, specifically with the purpose of strengthening African Studies. The conference was entitled 'National conference on the strengthening of African studies in Africa and South Africa in particular' and took place in Pretoria in February 2006. I was asked to showcase the work of the Centre for African Studies (CAS) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and what follows was my address.*

### **History**

CAS at UCT was constituted in 1976 and built on the work of the School of African Studies, which had been in existence for over fifty years, making it one of the oldest in the world. CAS is now a department in the Graduate School within the Faculty of Humanities. The context has changed quite radically from our beginnings in the South Africa of 1976, when we could contribute to the production and storage of resources in opposition to Apartheid versions of history, culture and society.

It has changed quite profoundly from the days in the 1980s when we respected the academic boycott and attempted to build scholarship around contesting Apartheid and colonial versions of the past, present and future, within an understanding of how critical was the de-colonizing/de-segregating the minds of our students.

Now, in an interesting paradox, in the 21st century, we see the key to developing African Studies – local and continental scholarship – as happening through conversations internationally. This also involves an exploration of the nature of the African Diaspora in relation to the continent.

### **'We all teach Africa' – Why do we need Centres for African Studies on the African continent?**

There is a difference between Centres for African Studies in Africa and those in Europe or North America, which, by definition, were established on the model of area studies. We distance ourselves from this model, which would be anachronistic in Africa today.

The teaching of Africa *in* Africa must be mainstreamed into the disciplines. My own field is African literature, which I teach to undergraduates in the English department. Likewise, there are, of course, courses in African history in the history department, African politics in Political Studies and so on.

This leads to question of why we need such Centres on the continent. All the disciplines in African Universities surely now teach about African history, literature, politics and so on? *For us, a Centre for African Studies is not simply about African content in the disciplines.* It is about interface or conversations between the disciplines, within a particular intellectual project, that relates to the politics of transformation on our campus, post-Apartheid and post-Colonialism. This transformation is occurring at the level of the nature of the production of knowledge, the curriculum, and the forging of new partnerships.

### **What is our intellectual project?**

In brief, we promote multidisciplinary studies within a Critical Humanities project. More specifically, we focus on knowledge production on Africa and the sometimes buried or distorted intellectual histories of the continent.

In other words, the work we do in CAS at UCT is focused on examining the ways in which knowledge of Africa has been constructed in a wide range of discourses. These run through the entire spectrum from the images of Africa in popular culture to the more academic questions of the nature of the construction of the disciplines themselves, their methodology and language, which were forged in the alliance between knowledge and power. We strive to provide a critical understanding of how knowledge in and about Africa, and the scholarship through which that knowledge is filtered, has been mediated through the lenses of the colonial and the Apartheid libraries.

In the process, African intellectual histories, knowledges, languages and scholarship have often been distorted and buried. We attempt to understand this historically, politically and within the framework that contact, mixture and syncretism characterize all societies. This means that we interrogate the focus on indigenous knowledge systems, where this seems to essentialize and freeze African history and scholarship.

### **Activities arising out of the intellectual project:**

We offer a *multidisciplinary graduate programme* – Diploma, Honours and Masters, with core courses and electives. Students are able to tailor multidisciplinary curriculum. We also offer two somewhat more focused streams in Public Culture and in African Literature and Culture.

Some of our core courses within this graduate programme include ‘Images of Africa’, ‘Problematising the Study of Africa: Interrogating the Disciplines’, ‘Debates in African Studies: Intellectuals of the African Liberation’ and ‘Collection, Representation and Display: The African Archive’.

In addition to doing this quite conventional academic work, we are also more than a department and run a range of activities, designed to bring different areas into conversation with each other in a multidisciplinary framework. We have been running a multidisciplinary seminar series for over 25 years; We run a multi-disciplinary journal, *Social Dynamics*, which is accredited and committed to multidisciplinary research; We run a student journal, *Post/Amble*, to promote and provide a platform for student publication; We contribute to the holdings and policy of the *African Studies Library*, and its *Manuscripts and Archives* division; As part of our commitment to internationalization, we work closely with the International Office and International programmes at UCT. We are also developing a speciality in African Diaspora studies and have established a three-way partnership between ourselves, Brown University in the USA and the University of the West Indies, Mona. We are initiating student exchanges, the sharing of courses and are planning a forthcoming conference on the theme of *Exploring African and African Diasporic Knowledge*.

All of these issues, questions and activities cannot be conducted within the ambit of any one discipline. We see strong disciplines as essential in order for this interface across the

disciplines to take place. The institutional relationship, however, between centres and departments based on disciplines, is often fraught.

### **The struggle over resources**

There is always a tension between the departments and multidisciplinary centres like our own. This is exacerbated by our mission, which is to engage in those activities that I have described that go beyond the core business of the university, in an environment where resources are tight. In Nigeria African Studies came to grief in Ibadan Ife and Lagon when they lost the battle over resources. We, too, are small, often find ourselves in the interstices and are struggling to make our work more effective within the faculty and the university at large. Meetings such as this one, highlighting issues and addressing problems are, therefore, very helpful.

### **Post-conference review**

A point of consensus (amidst a great deal of difference) was that the challenge lay in embedding African knowledge and theory in African experience. While there was quite a bit of (what could be quite dead end) debate around who constitutes an African, there was consensus that an African had to be defined in such a way as to include the diaspora. What was repeatedly called for was a new paradigm, a paradigm shift, away from the hegemony of European models. A key to this shift was conceptualized as resulting from a conversation across disciplines.

A challenge which was raised, and which is crucial, is how to link this shift and these conversations to theory and method, such that the rigour of scholarship is retained? In other words, the critique must be made, but from what standpoint? One view was that the shift will not take place until Africans do the work of theorizing themselves, instead of borrowing, imitating or even manipulating European theory. Underlying many delegates' views of the key to discovering this new language of theory, and the tools and lenses through which to view it, lay with indigenous knowledge systems. This I found quite simplistic and even problematic in the mythologizing and freezing of the past. The debate also tended to establish the quite flawed the binary of African and non-African – people, culture or knowledge.

There was a lot of discussion around the meaning of African Studies itself – whether we were referring to the study of Africa within the disciplines or to dedicated centres like our own. There seemed to be some agreement regarding the necessity for curriculum transformation across the board at our tertiary institutions and that mainstreaming was crucial. At the same time, the role of Centres and Units dedicated to African Studies, to act as 'engines of change' was also recognised. This was linked, almost unanimously, to furthering the conversations between the disciplines. Different terms were employed, such as trans-, inter-, multi-, cross- and even non-disciplinary. All of these related to the need for a paradigm shift and links to the intellectual work discussed above. What was emphasized that nothing could happen without 'buy-in' from the Vice-Chancellors of our institutions, but also for curriculum and other changes to happen prior to the university, especially at the level of the schools.

## **Natasha Distiller**

### **Knowing Better**

The university is perhaps uniquely placed to make a progressive intervention into the workings of patriarchy in our society. By 'patriarchy' I mean to indicate a complex network of cultural and structural forces that construct a social environment which operates through a system of domination (Benjamin 1988). Furthermore, a patriarchal order values and privileges male subjects (and modes of behaviour that accord with a subject position we can designate 'male', although some women have access to it). It does not accord this privilege independently of other affiliations: race and class, especially, but also in various contexts sexuality, ethnicity, or religious identity, for example, will all function to establish networks which authorize certain voice and bodies, and marginalize, silence, or de-prioritize others. Able-bodiedness is perhaps the most taken-for-granted value within this order, leaving those who do not conform to physical or mental definitions of 'the usual' in a position of permanent struggle with regards to navigating the world, both literally and figuratively.

Violence is a permanent feature of a patriarchal order. I do not only mean to indicate the levels of violence against bodies that takes place at every level of a patriarchal society: in homes, in schools and other social institutions, on the streets, between nations. Differently pernicious is the violence that occurs at the level of representation, where common sense values are entrenched and ways of seeing, knowing, and understanding are constructed, and then lived as though natural. Violence at the level of representation can encourage or endorse physical and sexual violence in part through this process of naturalization of attitudes and of subject positions. I consider patriarchal formations to be intrinsic to all Western cultures, and to most other cultures in recorded history, including many African societies. Patriarchies emerge from, and change with, histories. Thus, I also consider the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism emerging in particular forms in the neo-colonial present to be co-constitutive and to be a powerful alliance that is currently very much on top in the global order. This is not to suggest some grand conspiracy on the part of disembodied concepts granted a sort of arcane agency. It is to suggest that global power structures, nations, societies, communities, families and individual psyches operate through the rhizomatic workings (Ashcroft 2001) of multiple, sometimes contesting, systems of power which emerge from history and are reflected in, and perpetuated through, material structures and the knowledge and experiences these structures produce.

All of this, and more, is well-known to some practitioners of many disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, although the details are always in debate and up for re-evaluation as our own ways of knowing respond to our local histories and current disciplinary moments (or, indeed, fashions). If knowledge is itself the product of complex systems of investments, disavowals, and desires, even as it in turn helps to shape the systems from which it emerges, then there will never be one truth about how and why patriarchy operates, or one answer. There will only ever be a series of questions, and none of this work will ever be innocent of what has, at various times in our disciplinary histories been called politics, ideology, hegemony, or discourse, amongst other things.

All of this matters to some of us working in universities because we can do work that is interrogative of the status quo. This is one of the skills the humanities can offer to our

students: ways of asking self-conscious questions. If our work enables graduates to leave the institution better able to deconstruct the meaning that is being made around them, in all forms of media and in the workings of the everyday, they will be better able to make choices about who they want to be and about how they want to interact with other people. For me, this is the most important definition of being educated. It is also one way to effect social change. Students who do not take things for granted, who interrogate the commonsensical, who know to look for the inevitable investments in any construction of the truth, are people who are well-equipped to navigate the choppy waters of post-apartheid South Africa, and offer useful interventions into the patriarchal structure at whatever level they engage it.

I began by saying that the university is perhaps uniquely placed to do this work. Let me now be more specific. The university as a secular institution in post-apartheid South Africa, under a Constitution that places so much emphasis on equality, is a protected environment. We can demand of our students and colleagues that they respect each one of us (in terms of those whose access to structural and social power is reduced, female, black, gay, HIV-positive, disabled, poor, rural would all comprise identity constituents whose dignity and rights are putatively protected by the university as an institutional structure in South Africa). We can prevent hate speech in the classroom and in other university gatherings because we have the legal right to do so. We are not living in a society whose operative rules seek to silence or stigmatize. At least in theory. There are too many problems in the implementation of these rights, in the country and on campus, to bear repeating here. The point is, however, that as academics and students we have the starting point privilege of the possibility for insisting on our mutual equality. Furthermore, because of its liberal heritage, a university like UCT is on the face of it committed to facilitating this equality. Despite liberalism's extremely problematic tendency to efface difference and entrench its raced, classed, and gendered version of itself (Mehta 1999; Brown 1993), and despite the specific incarnations of liberalism in South Africa which have tended to fail to live up to their elevated rhetoric of, especially, racial equality (see for example Rich 1984), UCT's liberal character commits the institution to at least a cosmetic veneer of heterogeneity in a way that the institutional cultures of, say, corporate entities do not.

We can teach classes on feminism and queer studies, on race and identity, and while not everyone may like it, they cannot overtly use the structure to prevent those of us who work in these areas from doing our work, or from making our voices available to students. This is in contrast to, for example, Britain, where until recently teachers (and other local authorities) were prevented by law, Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, from acknowledging homosexuality as a viable identity. It is in this protected work, in this privileged space of inquiry protected by the nominal respect for difference, that the university can help to change things for the better.

The university space is privileged in another way, too. This privilege lies in the fact that the nature of our work is to theorize, even as, quite appropriately, we must respond to questions about the relationship between our theorizing and the world around us. We get paid to ask the questions people in other jobs do not always have time, or incentive, or inclination, to ask. Of course the university is not the only space in which such work occurs: South Africa has a vital civil society sector which has always done this work, in

some cases better than the university because more rooted in its practice. Nevertheless, we are the people who get paid to be our society's intellectuals. Most other intellectuals do not work from this specific context.

We do not always make the most of our opportunities. Located in our overlapping worlds as we are (as an institution, as individuals, as interest groups on campus), we easily tend to replicate the common senses from which we come. We are not, for example, theorizing the workings of heterosexuality (Bennett 2006) or ongoing white supremacy (Steyn 2001) as we could be. Instead we tend to re-inscribe structures of gender and race domination which occur in every other identity issue on campus. Nevertheless, it remains a component of our job descriptions to think critically about what we have previously taken for granted, free of the imperative to implement beyond our classrooms and our publications. In this, in this privilege, in the context of the legal protection we enjoy in South Africa, the university is perhaps uniquely placed to make a progressive intervention into the workings of patriarchy in our society.

## ***Elom Dowlu***

### **The University in Africa: The Ghanaian Experience**

#### **Introduction**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Academic knowledge and industry-required skills**

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

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

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

### **Curriculum development**

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

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

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

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

### **Increasing the student population and the quality of teachings and learning**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Staff development**

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

First there is the need to attract young and visionary staff. In Ghana poor salaries have made it difficult to attract young lectures to replace an ageing population of lecturers. At

the University of Ghana, Legon, 40% of the faculty are due to retire within the next five years and many retired lecturers are presently serving on contract.

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

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

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

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

### **Funding and fund-raising**

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

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

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

### **New Universities**

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

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

However, since Ghana liberalized tertiary education in the 1990s, the new universities (founded mainly by religious bodies) focus mainly on Theology and Business

Administration. A few pay lip service to IT-related courses!

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

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

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

### **Conclusion**

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

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

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

## **John Higgins**

### **Remarks on 'The University in Africa': A Colloquium**

There's [been] an instructive paradox operating in our remarks and discussions this morning. It's one that points to or indicates an important void in much current thinking on the role, purpose and function of higher education, both globally and locally.

The paradox is this: All policy documents point to or assume the centrality of science and technology to the university of the twenty-first century, particularly with regard to the idea that universities can serve, in the words of Juma's position paper, as 'engines of both community development and social renewal'.

Yet for all of this real centrality in terms of funding and support, each of the scientists here this morning introduced themselves (or were introduced as) somehow being out of place in a discussion such as ours, as alienated from, or ill at ease with, any historical or theoretical discussion of the changing idea of the university in Africa.

This paradox is best understood as one of a double and self-confirming alienation.

In terms of policy and funding, scientists are at the centre of higher education policy yet tend to feel alienated and marginalized from any serious discussion or analysis of its terms. Meanwhile humanists and social scientists – who are often marginalized in terms of policy and positively deterred or disadvantaged in terms of funding – are somehow central to the forms of specific historical, conceptual and theoretical analysis which are necessary for understanding the world which successful policy wishes to deal with. It's as if C.P. Snow's ill-advised division of learning into two opposed and antithetical cultures – of science versus the humanities – still ruled our ways of thinking. At the centre of policy-making, where there should be a confluence or meeting-ground of interests and understandings, there is instead a void or absence where the forms of analysis associated with advanced literacy should be, and should be recognized as such. It is this failure of recognition that results in a situation in which – as this morning – both scientists and humanists feel alienated from a higher education policy whose central and focus is science and technology alone, but the only mediating element in which serious discussion can take place – historical and theoretical analysis – apparently belongs to the humanities and social sciences. What is repressed in current policy formulations – the centrality of the skills of advanced literacy, which should figure alongside and as a part of any emphasis on science and technology – returns as a double alienation in which scientists and humanists have no place to meet.

For the focus on science and technology is clear enough. As Juma puts it, 'Little will happen unless governments realize the strategic role that universities can play in harnessing the world's fund of scientific and technological knowledge for development.' Each of his examples of successful curriculum development is taken from the fields of science and technology and their commercial application: the EARTH University in Costa Rica 'whose curriculum is designed to match the realities of agribusiness', Stellenbosch University's design and launching of a satellite; the curricula of the Kigali Institute of Science, Technology and Management in Rwanda. Similarly, the founding charter of South Africa's National Research Foundation identified science and technology as the main agents of social improvement. All in all, as Masao Mayoshi put it,

contemporary analyses of the institutional economy of universities 'have nothing whatever to say on the humanities, as if this branch of learning had already vanished'.

Yet any genuinely hard-headed consideration of problems with, or threats to, either the local or global dimensions of the economy is likely to reveal the indissoluble link in the real world between the humanities and the sciences. For the simple truth is that the practical knowledges that science and technology pride themselves quite justly on providing for the purposes of social development are always and everywhere embodied in historically specific cultural practices. The thorn to grasp is that the universal logics of scientific research and technological development – discovered under strict laboratory conditions – are performed outside laboratories and research centres in the real world of culture.

Practical knowledge is everywhere embodied in cultural practice – specifically linguistic, but also corporeal and gendered, and obedient to social rules that are likely to be both conscious and unconscious, poised, as it were, just adjacent to and in practice overlapping with, the realm of pure knowledge.

In reality, this means that few of the world's problems – from AIDS to overpopulation and climate change – are amenable to exclusively scientific and technological resolution. As is all too clear in South Africa, with the case of AIDS. Whatever treatment of AIDS science can provide, the reality of that treatment is a complex cultural transaction that requires the contribution of humanistic understanding to make it work. A successful AIDS policy requires work in history, theory, cultural identity, the dynamics of communication and representation, gender and sexual disposition to have any chance of success.

What the example of AIDS suggests, in conclusion, is that for universities to make their proper contribution to addressing the goals of social development means placing or accepting the fact that the humanistic understanding of the facts of culture, history, politics and representation are essential to putting the practical knowledges of science and technology into practice.

Higher educational reform needs to place the skills of advanced literacy – the skills made available in the diverse disciplines of the humanities and social sciences – alongside 'science and technology' if the university is to have a real chance of contributing to social and economic development.

## ***Dan Izevbaye***

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

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

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

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

A case study may throw some light on some more general problems. In Nigeria, for example, two complementary models emerged at Independence. At Ibadan, the academic structure of the former University College with its special relationship with the University

of London remained, but African content became increasingly dominant. One slight anomaly in this development was the survival of the Institute of African Studies as a separate unit. In spite of the significant work being done at the Institute, it could be argued that in an African university the function of such an institute is largely reflexive, since it is realistic to expect most teaching and research in an African university to be African in content and purpose.

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

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

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

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

The second issue is intertwined with the first. Many of the students in private universities, who were educated in private secondary schools, have imbibed the Westernized, elitist

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

## **Samuel O King**

### **University in Africa Symposium – A student’s perspective**

As an (International) graduate student in IT at the University of Cape Town (UCT), my first impression is that there should have been more student representation at a symposium of such magnitude. I recall that at a similar event on affirmative action last year the student body was fully involved in all the dialogues and panel discussions. The problem may have been partly that the advertisement of the programme was limited – I was aware of only the advert on the UCT website. Posters could have been put all over campus, as this is a guaranteed way to create student awareness. I think there needs to be significant student input to programmes of this nature.

Apart from the panellist from the Engineering Faculty, I was probably the only person at the symposium who is not from the Humanities. It seems there is a subtle schism: science students stay away from seemingly humanities functions and arts students cannot be found at an event with engineering theme. One way that UCT and other universities in Africa can change this anomaly is by redesigning the curriculum such that students from the different faculties can develop an appreciation for disciplines other than their own. At the University of Ibadan (UI), for instance, all first year students from the sciences and engineering have to take two compulsory courses in the humanities as part of the General Studies programme.

I found the discussion and the panellists’ response to Juma’s position on the role the modern African university should play informative, lively and often contrary. I think those who believe that the university should be primarily a centre for learning and cultivation of the human mind are right. And, those who say that the African university needs to, as a matter of urgency, reinvent itself in order to better meet and provide practical solutions to the huge developmental needs the Continent faces are not wrong at all. The main issue for me is how these two seemingly divergent views are harmonized.

I think we can start by changing the way we look at the problem. The issue should not be about whether to take this or that approach. This is because universities are not static, rather they are ‘organisms’ that are subject to the demands of the times they find themselves in. Most of the first-generation universities in the US were set up for the training of clergy. Those universities, which include Harvard and Princeton, have since moved away from their foundational missions in response to different realities and demands.

An African university like UCT (or UI), whose goal is to be a research-led university, cannot be too developmental in its approach due to structural and historical constraints. However, it can still embrace the challenge of making its curriculum and learning environment friendlier to entrepreneurship-spurring activities and projects that can provide tangible local, regional (i.e. Western Cape) and national benefits. On the other hand, universities like CPUT, UWC, Venda or ESUT<sup>6</sup> could be more project- and

---

<sup>6</sup> CPUT – Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa; UWC – University of the Western Cape, South Africa; Venda – University of Venda, South Africa; ESUT – Enugu State University of Technology, Nigeria.

community development-oriented. This is because they are younger (and by extension, supposed to be more receptive to new ideas), closer to the community and some, like Venda, can develop expertise in cottage industry entrepreneurship development as they are situated in resource-rich areas.

I think African universities can also be specialized. This means it is possible to have research-oriented and undergraduate teaching-focused universities side by side with, for instance, universities of technology, agriculture, etc. Universities with a main focus on agriculture should be situated in those regions that are considered to be the food baskets of their respective countries. There is also room for universities with a concentration on technology. These may help stimulate local industry or provide a breeding ground for start ups as well as provide the structural framework for competing for US/EU-outsourced jobs. This option (i.e. university specialization) can be implemented by either identifying those institutions that need to redefine their mission and goals in light of their environmental distinctive or private universities can step in to fill the void. In any case, private universities have traditionally been more entrepreneurial in approach. A shining example of this is CIDA, Johannesburg.

In addition, the critical infrastructural needs and the drawbacks in the typical African university learning environment need to be addressed for meaningful development and progress to occur. Excellence will be an unwelcome guest in the continent's towers of learning as long as graduate students do not have access to computers, laboratories are not functioning, lecture halls are far too overcrowded, lecturers are grossly underpaid, and students live in run-down residence halls.

Capital, or the lack of it, is also a major issue. Many African students are first-generation undergraduates and there is a lot of pressure on them to succeed and so repay their parents' hard labour and faith in them. But this is usually against the backdrop of these students having to do whatever it takes to keep body and soul together while studying. Although most African countries have bodies dedicated towards funding research; in reality, most of these agencies have little impact and/or funding. There are very few grants or loans available to students from either the government or private sector. So the African student is on his/her own. While finance is a problem anywhere including affluent economies, Africa (apart from South Africa, where the NRF is very active) singularly lacks elaborate funding schemes that are geared towards students.

I recall a participant raised the issue of intra-African exchanges. I think the level of interaction and student/staff linkages among African universities is low and unimpressive. Although there are financial, structural and historical reasons for this state of affairs, this cannot be allowed to continue. There should be more mobility between our respective institutions, with students encouraged to spend one or two semesters at a partnering African university. This is the only way to facilitate cross breeding of ideas and the development of a truly African intellectual tradition.

The last issue I will like to broach is the use of ICT in education and to spur development. As Professor Soudien's presentation showed, the use of ICT has not been producing the desired results. Research clearly indicates that merely throwing IT applications at a problem or developmental challenge does not make it go away. For ICT to have an impact, they must be deployed in a manner that takes into consideration the social,

physical and technical limitations of the target group. A good way to illustrate this point is through my current work. I am conducting research on the use of 2D barcodes or visual tags for the tagging of physical objects in order to stimulate social and educational interaction. The use of these visual codes can enable individuals to take a picture of, for instance, a manuscript or textbook with a camera phone and they, i.e. the users, can then be taken directly to the URL (website) of the manuscript or textbook. This application has several commercial and educational potentials. But for it to be widely adopted – and practical to use – several barriers have to be overcome. This is the nature of ICT. They are not in and of themselves potent, it is how they are applied that makes them useful and helpful.

I will conclude by saying it is imperative that the African university rethinks its mission and goals in the light of current needs and future demands. However, in so doing, it should not abandon the traditional role of the university as a place for the dissemination of learning and knowledge. The African university should also follow the ‘specialization’ model, address infrastructural concerns, and broaden access including the provision of financial packages to deserving students. Last, ICT can and should be a huge aid in the developmental process. But this can only be achieved if it is prudently deployed and managed.

## ***Alison Emslie Lewis***

### **The special contribution of engineers**

The special contribution of engineers is based on their ability to solve problems, using an understanding of fundamental scientific concepts to design and build processes, infrastructure, machines, buildings and products and thus science for the benefit of the community.

In the context of science and engineering, general principles will be similar throughout the world, in many different contexts, since they are broadly applicable. However, the local details become extremely relevant when the principle is applied to a specific instance and must be taken into account in the application. Neglecting local conditions or getting them wrong can be disastrous. This gives us a general guideline for the development of engineering curricula that are to address issues that are particular to 'Universities in Africa'.

### **Engineering work in the South African context**

Case (2006) outlined two areas of involvement of South African engineering professionals in the national development enterprise – building and maintaining infrastructure in the public sector and contributing towards economic growth in the private sector.

In the public sector, engineering professionals in the employ of the parastatals have always been involved in the provision of transport, communication and electrification. Engineering professionals, especially those in the civil engineering disciplines, are involved in general urban development and upgrading of infrastructure, and many are employed by municipalities and provinces. In this sector, it is relatively simple – with the alignment of government and universities – to Calestous Juma's recommendation to put these professional skills to the service of the African people, while still applying the principle of internationally competent professionals with the ability to relate the broad fundamental principles to the locally specific conditions.

Case also describes how, in the private sector, engineers are employed in a wide range of commercial enterprises and are often found at the helm of large corporate enterprises. The South African engineering industry sector has a strong focus on the extraction of raw materials, with relatively little value added before export. The manufacturing industry is widely considered to be underdeveloped (ECSA & EASA, 1995). In general there is not much research and development conducted in South African engineering companies, with technology usually imported from elsewhere (Kahn, 1997).

In this sector, it is much more challenging to examine how the generic skills are to be applied to the local conditions. In the apartheid era, local conditions led to the development of activities such as our particular petrochemical industry and development of expertise in defence.

### **Local details**

On the issue of local details, Trevor Manuel (2006) reviewed the history of the built environment in South Africa; a history marked by inequality and injustice, and spoke about the necessity for new engineers to engage with the issue of democratizing space.

This applies in specifically to the discipline of planning. The question is: how does this point of view translate into the pressing issues facing other engineering disciplines? The flowsheet **above** illustrates the complexity of some of the relationships between the university and the community.

## **Mbulungeni Madiba**

### **A Linguistic Perspective**

*A significant measure of the attention of African universities to things African can be gauged from the level of interest in African languages which are the key to understanding African patterns of thought, collective wisdom, historical traditions, and religious ideas. For each African community, its most distinct contribution is its language. (Ajayi, et al.)*

That the university in Africa should seek to redefine its identity and mission is no longer a matter of debate. Accordingly, Calestous Juma's proposition for a 'developmental university' should be seen as a call for the African university to reinvent itself. It is now an accepted fact that the modern African university, although has contributed significantly to the training of civil servants for the independent states, it has remained alien to the African context. As Ajayi et al. (1996) rightly point out, one of the factors that have contributed to this alienation is language. Language remains one of the major obstacles in the link between the African university and its community, the academia and the masses. African universities have despite the end to colonialism, and apartheid in the case of South Africa, remain committed to the use of foreign languages such as English and French as the mediums of education. In fact, up to now, there is no university in sub-Saharan Africa which uses an African language as a medium of education in discipline other than language.

Several African scholars have repeatedly warned against the danger of relying on foreign languages as mediums of education in African universities. Ali Mazrui (1996), for example, warns that the 'choice of European languages as the media of instruction in African universities has had profound cultural consequences for the societies served by those universities'. Fafunwa (1990:103), one of the African educationists, also regard the use of foreign languages as mediums of education in African universities as not empowering to the ordinary people and their communities. He has the following to say in this regard:

We impart knowledge and skills almost exclusively in foreign languages, while the majority of our people, farmers, and craftsmen perform their daily tasks in Yoruba, Hausa, Wolof, Ga, Igbo, Bambara, kiSwahili, etc. The question is: Why not help them to improve their social, economic, and political activities via their mother tongue? Why insist on their learning English or French first before modern technology could be introduced?

Thus, the question of crucial concern for Calestous Juma's proposition is whether African universities are ready or willing to promote indigenous African languages as mediums of education. This question has in fact become the focus of much discussion in South Africa since the democratic change of 1994. Accordingly, the South African government has adopted the National Language Policy for Higher Education in 2002 to foster the promotion of multilingualism in higher education. Although not much progress has been achieved thus far, the adoption of this policy is an important milestone in addressing the language question in higher education. Subsequently, most universities have developed language policies that seek to promote multilingual higher education which, according to UNESCO General Conference Resolution adopted in 1992 (UNESCO 2003), may be

defined as 'the use of at least three languages, the mother tongue, a regional or national language and an international language in education'.

The move towards multilingual higher education in South Africa, and perhaps in Africa as a whole, is highly recommended if the dream of 'an African university for Africa' is to be realized. The rationale for multilingual higher education is to support the African university to meet the requirements of global and national participation and the specific needs of particular, culturally and linguistically distinct communities. Accordingly, multilingual higher education will enable the African university to maximize the benefits of internationalization while promoting the preservation of cultural identities, mobility and dialogue.

The big question, however, is how can multilingual education be practically implemented in African universities. There is no easy answer to this question. What is needed from the African university is to be more creative in using the linguistic capital available in its context. One way of doing this is to adopt the *Complementary Language Use Approach*, which proceeds from the premise of using the African languages as auxiliary mediums of instruction in the non-language disciplines with the long-term goal to use them as primary mediums of instruction in certain disciplines according to the realities of the society concerned (Bokamba and Tlou 1980:54). This approach is recommended by many scholars for use in multilingual developing countries that face the challenge of gaining ground against the dominance of a foreign language (cf. Bamgbose 2000, Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1986). According to Dua (1994:132), one of the prominent Indian scholars of language planning, 'the development of the balanced complementarity of English with the indigenous languages in all the Third World countries is necessary for viable language education, growth of multilingualism and development of indigenous languages'. As Bamgbose (2000:207) further indicates, in multilingual and multicultural contexts, there is need to go beyond 'linguistic imperialism', 'linguicism' and 'language rights' to stress the interdependent relationship between English and the indigenous languages, thus there should be no conflict between the promotion of English and the recognition of its interdependence with other languages.

In conclusion, the use of languages in complementarities will enable the African university to develop its own path of development relevant to the continent's situation, and 'to make a specific African contribution to the world of scholarship, research, and knowledge, inspired by the African insight, historical experience and challenges' (Ajayi et al., 1996: 234). Furthermore, this complementarity of language use will enable students to participate meaningfully in knowledge creation, dissemination and application. Such knowledge can then be globalized through the use of global languages like English. And again, the local languages may be used to customize the global knowledge for use by the general public, as is the case in countries such as Japan.

## ***Bella Mukonyora***

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

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

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

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

methods it relies one to work side by side in the event of calls for dialogue across disciplines.

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

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

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

of the world they live in, not divide people and limit the horizons of students so that they are not able to benefit from advanced education abroad.

## ***Thandabantu Nhlapo***

This colloquium comes at an appropriate time, when several factors are coming together to render the fortunes of higher education in Africa more positive than they have been in decades. In the first place, the rising tide of democratic governance across the continent and the slow but inexorable process of extinguishing long-standing conflicts, have conjoined to improve stability in many regions. This has cleared the way for national governments to turn their attention to the development of their own peoples, where the link with higher education is being increasingly affirmed.

This is happening at a time when international funding agencies and the donor community are proving to be well-disposed towards higher education in Africa, a fact confirmed by the commitment of significant amounts in support of libraries, ICT, staff development, research and innovation, academic administration and a range of other components of university life.

In South Africa this trend has led to a rise amongst higher education institutions of consciousness and interest in debates about internationalization. This consciousness is occurring within the context of reflections on the economy, on the skills shortage and the role that higher education ought to play in national and continental development. The University of Cape Town in particular has sought to assert its commitment to transformation through internationalization and the maintenance of a truly diverse campus, in the belief that a UCT education is a thing of value precisely because it is enriched by the wisdom, values, humour, intellectual and leisure traditions of the broader community in Africa and further afield.

Twenty per cent of the number of students enrolled at UCT are international students, more than half of whom are from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and who, according to the SADC protocol, pay the same level of tuition fees applicable to South Africans. In this respect, South Africa exceeds the minimum quota set by the SADC Protocol (5%) by far. The total number of non-SADC students is also growing steadily every year, with significant intakes from the Horn of Africa and from East, West and Central Africa.

Through special partnerships, such as the University Science, Humanities and Engineering Partnerships in Africa (USHEPiA) programme, UCT is contributing to the intellectual and institutional capacities of participating universities in Southern and East Africa. Through institutional and other links (formal and informal), UCT enriches and is enriched by its global partners. Research by the International Academic Programmes Office (IAPO) suggests that there is a huge number of academic and research collaborations between UCT and other African universities in a wide range of disciplines and areas ranging from HIV/AIDS to food security and poverty reduction.

What this means is that the continent is looking to higher education to lead the way in identifying evidence-based solutions aimed at addressing the challenges facing the continent. It is also expecting higher education institutions to cooperate with one another in order to maximize the potential that exists in Africa to deal with its own problems. This expectation is shared by donor agencies, who have made it clear that collaborative

ventures are to be encouraged as they widen the impact of initiatives and increase the prospects of sustainability.

The time has never been more right for the African university to take internationalization seriously, starting with the strengthening of engagement amongst themselves. UCT is ready to play its part in this process.

## ***Lungisile Ntsebeza***

The theme of this colloquium is 'The University in Africa'. This may create the false impression that universities in Africa are homogenous. Yet, while it may be true that universities on the continent share a common experience of having been shaped by the colonial experience, this should not downplay and underestimate the vast differences that exist among universities both within countries and across the continent. In many ways, the University of Cape Town (UCT) is a good illustration of this. For this reason, the focus of my position paper will be UCT.

The broader context within which to locate UCT in post-1994 South Africa is, firstly, the division between historically black universities, in most cases hugely under resourced on the one hand and well-resourced, historically white universities on the other. Secondly, in terms of the curriculum, there was largely an avoidance particularly pre-1994 to teach courses which focused on the African continent and hardly any engagement with universities on the continent and its scholars.

Dealing with this schizophrenia poses a major challenge for a university such as UCT. At home, the challenge is how UCT can transform itself from a university that largely catered for the needs and interests of a tiny white minority drawn from the middle to upper classes to opening up its resources to also accommodate the needs and interests of the downtrodden, mainly blacks. Within the continent, the challenge is for UCT to demonstrate in concrete terms that it not only sees itself as a university that is geographically located on the continent but an integral part thereof. The critical question for our purposes, I suppose, is what this all means for the curriculum. This brings me to a discussion of the role of universities in Africa in general and UCT in particular.

Calestous Juma has given a particular understanding and interpretation of the role of African universities in contemporary times. His main pre-occupation seems to be economic development and how 'the world's existing fund of knowledge' can be harnessed for this enterprise. For Juma, universities have an important role to play in this. According to him, there is a need for the creation of a new generation of African universities that focus on solving community problems. He argues, amongst others, that universities can achieve the above 'through close linkages with the private sector' and 'extensive international partnerships with institutions such as the World Bank, something that 'will require major adjustments in the way that universities function in Africa' and the developing world. He emphasizes the importance of the role of universities in 'community development' – they need to become 'developmental universities', working directly in the communities they are located in. Juma concludes that African universities must 'shape the curricula, teaching and location of these institutions so they can perform developmental tasks'.

The notion of the role and relevance of universities in society seems to be at the heart of Njabulo Ndebele's 'manifesto' of October 2005: 'Living Transformation'. His main focus, as the title of this document suggests, is transformation at UCT. One of his concerns is the UCT curriculum particularly its relevance in post-1994 democratic South Africa. Ndebele is also mindful of the need not only to enrich the experience of students

at UCT but to also 'broaden access' to the institution.

The rest of this paper will critically reflect on the positions of Juma and Ndebele. I agree with both of them that universities, including UCT, are an integral part of society and what goes on in universities should be of service to society. I also agree with Juma that universities should shape their curriculum to tackle developmental tasks. The question, though, is what is development?

For Juma, economic development in Africa should be organized through a close working relationship with the private sector and institutions such as the World Bank, amongst others. Here I'm inclined to disagree with Juma. My problem with this formulation is that it makes assumptions about the private sector and the World Bank that are fiercely contested by a number of top scholars and researchers globally. Scholars that come to mind from the continent include Samir Amin and Dani Nabudere, but there are many others. There is a very particular role of universities that Juma's account, certainly the one I have read, does not even allude to: production of knowledge through critical engagement. Zeleza has recently made this point most powerfully when he addressed a colloquium here at UCT on 4 September 2006:

Let me conclude by saying that the need to redefine the role of higher education institutions as important centres for the production of critical knowledge has never been greater than it is now. The challenge is to ensure that marketization does not turn higher education institutions into vocational schools and consultancy outfits, that as they transform themselves they remain committed to the production of knowledge for social progress rather than the peddling of information for private profit.

Indeed, social sciences in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s were characterized by animated and robust debates about the nature of society and issues of race and class. This was all in a bid to understand the complexities of society and critical issues of exclusion and inclusion. The dominance of the current phase of global capitalism, which measures virtually every aspect of life in terms of the requirements of the market, is reducing universities to vocational centres preparing students for the market (jobs in industry). As Zeleza cautions, universities, including UCT should resist this temptation. Following Zeleza, my contention is that it is not the primary task of universities to prepare students for industry.

Our curriculum should first and foremost be informed by our local experiences and concerns. This is not a call for a parochial approach to things. What it means is that by focusing on the concerns, needs, interests and priorities of South Africans, particularly the historically disadvantaged, we can engage with the global in such a manner that we advance our needs and interests rather than those of the North and the rich. The starting point to achieve this, I propose, is to establish and strengthen ties with universities and scholars on the continent and teach courses on African societies seen within a global context.

Institutions such as UCT are also charged, following Ndebele, with broadening access to previously excluded students. In other words, the challenge for UCT is how to ensure that its resources are deployed such that students from the historically disadvantaged backgrounds benefit. Should UCT take this bold, important and necessary step, enough resources should be provided to ensure that these students are not marginalized and

frustrated when once they gain access.

## **Sam Raditlhalo**

*Erat Athenis domus capax et spatiosa, sed pestilens at infamis*

The three critical premises which Professor Calestous Juma highlights are as broad as they are pertinent. I agree with all three but wish to problematize the first question he poses for us.

Whatever may be said of Fidel Castro, he gave Cubanos their sense of themselves, their dignity as *beings-in-the-world* through a rigorous education system. Imagine if Cuba were the size of the Democratic Republic of Congo with all those resources! Size matters, but so does political will. Let me be bold and ask: Whose development, and for whose benefit? Development is an abused term since it suggests a lack, a deviance from the norm. Development Theory itself comes into being as a result of having displaced the colonizing theory, to repudiate the notion of ‘civilizing the barbarians’. Prior to World War II there was no question of African development. Once we are clear of the agenda of why we need talk of development, we can then, in answering the second question, apply the contexts of Professor Juma’s premises. In South Africa, it is also important not to fudge issues: formal education has been English and later Afrikaner in orientation since the 1800s. Es’kia Mphahlele sees the incongruities of the genesis of our educational system when he observes: ‘How did our education system come to where it is? The British imposed their own system of education on the Boers and the Africans – the latter through mission schools and training – when they ruled the Cape Colony from 1795 to 1802 and from 1806 to about 1901’ (2002: 84). An awareness of the past sets us on the corrective path.

Black Africa came to the formal education system as a conquered people who had to be cleansed of their beliefs and ways. Thus we must be practical – how do we insert African Culture in the call to Africanize universities and gear them for development. Such a call has been met with cynicism, condescension and hostility in the past. It still borders on the ridiculous that our own students do not know anything about themselves. Medical students have, to date, not read a single Zakes Mda text, nor a Chinua Achebe text, do not know of Walter Rodney’s intellectual legacy, nor Franz Fanon’s, nor Njabulo Ndebele as author, or Mphahlele as the last living intellectual of the New African Movement, nor Miriam Tlali, any other Southern, let alone African writer. If they do know of one it is Tsitsi Dangarembga. Even then, the content of the little that they know is suspect. How do we produce structural, civil, electrical, chemical and all manner of engineers if such cannot even begin to understand concepts of development beyond a fat paycheck guaranteeing a good life? That is, in what ways can they be harnessed for African development beyond the mythology of ‘the global village’ in which they have invested – witness their flight soon after qualification. How do we produce medical people with no conception of the fact that they are a vital part of our countries that need retention? The universities’ agendas seem to be to assimilate as many graduates as possible into Western epistemologies, thought processes, and cultural practices. We are in effect producing cultural mulattoes, at an accelerated rate, without grounding in who they are, what heritage they have, which cultural ethos to aspire to. The Eurocentricism to which universities aspire is a case for serious concern. That Juma does not address such

development occludes aspects of self-realization, self-emancipation and self-knowledge.

The second question concerning the competence of academic staff is also germane. In our present dispensation, we have not yet done away with the myth concerning the fear about 'dropping standards'. This has had the effect of seeing to it that the transformation agenda of these institutions is held at bay. Twelve years into Uhuru and the present 'Age of Hope', we still cry 'transformation, transformation' as a mantra, the Holy Grail of our institutions. The question then becomes: what or who is applying the breaks on this transformation we all wish to see? For it will not happen by osmosis that we are able to upgrade the level of the academic competence of our universities of technology so that one day our students are able to produce, say micro-ships and write anti-virus software. Curriculum inventiveness will also help in this development: The University of Venda, for instance, has robustly set itself to work with agribusiness and forestry because of its location in the tropical far North. Development, too, should be hardheaded in its desires. For example, India set itself on the path of technological conquest when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru took political control. How long has India been independent to be able to achieve this feat? Today it can afford to export human resources. The latest diasporan wave of Indians to the West is a professional class, not pizza delivery men and women, nor taxi drivers, nor chars. We need vision, political will, and the kind of openness to admission that we now see at our medical school, notwithstanding the recent fulminations of one Mr. Tony Leon. What precludes governments from taking the top students from the poorest communities and offering them three-year scholarships plus one year of intensive apprenticeship so that when they complete they are immediately placed in the system in terms of national service? A plan has to be made rather than allowing top matriculants whose only sin is to having been born poor to rot while we scream 'manpower shortage, manpower shortage, manpower shortage' *ad nauseam*.

Thirdly, the idea that countries' universities can set up satellite institutions without being in agreement with the national and continental agendas of African continent is wrong and should be reviewed. We should make sure that if a foreign institution is allowed to operate in any country, it helps with an aspect that our own institutions are currently unable to provide. For instance, apart from charging exorbitant fees, what exactly did Monash University in Sandton achieve beyond its pretensions at superiority? What are its core disciplines which are not found in African countries? Without careful screening of these applications that accords with our developmental targets and goals, we run the risk, too, of allowing the sector to be overrun by fly-by-night institutions whose MBA programs cannot match the best our African universities can offer in terms of quality assurance. Differentiation is important and is already underway in our institutions, never mind the attempt to argue for equity and or parity, for, as Malegapuru Makgoba notes, all the universities in Africa, only Wits, Pretoria, Cape Town and KwaZulu-Natal featured in the academy ranking of Top 500 World Universities for 2005. The 'open sore of the continent', in Wole Soyinka's words, can only be healed once we set an agenda that, with commitment, can be realizable in as little as fifty years.

## ***Maano Ramutsindela***

Although it is generally accepted that universities should play a pivotal role in the advancement of the societies in which they are located, the nature of that role has been a subject of a much-heated debate. Calestous Juma has taken that debate further by locating it in Africa within the context of the needs of the continent. He suggests that the role of the university in Africa should be redefined to reposition universities in the continent as a developmental force. He argues that for this to happen, there should be synergy between government policy and the missions and curricula of institutions of higher education; universities should domesticate knowledge and diffuse it into the economy; and forge partnerships with government and the private sector to reinvent education. Clearly, there is merit in suggesting that universities in the continent should address Africa's development challenges. However, Juma has neither provided us with the meaning of development implied in his type of the university nor has he made an assessment of the conditions that should be met for a developmental university to emerge. Clarity on the notion of development is important, not least because there are different ideas about development and how it should be achieved at various scales. The few examples that Juma gave us suggest that his view of development is a technocratic one, which is embedded in the conventional logic of economic growth as a precondition for development. The history of development in Africa reveals that technical solutions are insufficient to resolve Africa's development challenges. There are a number of assumptions that Juma makes, which cannot be taken for granted.

Firstly, he assumes that African leaders should lead the way in 'curricula design, locations, choice of students and the management of the continent's universities' as if such leaders are readily available, and as if state intervention in higher education in the continent has always yielded positive results. This is not to invalidate the need for state involvement in higher education, as most universities in the continent are government institutions anyway. Rather, it is to suggest that creating new conditions under which the state and universities could jointly redefine the nature and goals of universities is a complex undertaking, which could delay the envisaged developmental role of the universities. We need to know what is wrong with the current state-university relations before we can even think about what could be achieved under such relationships.

Secondly, Juma assumes that reform in existing universities should be informed by the needs of the region in which they are located as if there is no element of regionalism among the current crop of universities. A great deal of lessons can be learnt from challenges that faced one of the most progressive but ill-fated project of a regional university in East Africa. Rather than reinventing a new form of regionalization, we need to assess the extent to which the current regional endeavours are contributing to meeting the challenges facing regional communities in Africa. There is also a need to go beyond regionalism if we are to harness the potentials of, and to deal with new challenges emanating from, the continent-wide development projects, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Thirdly, to assume that there is one function for all universities in the continent is to undermine the need for diversity in a continent that can best be served by different types

of educational institutions. To suggest that we should reinvent a new education for Africa would be to confirm the ill-founded but well-established stereotype of Africa as a unique place and to confine universities in the continent to the periphery of global scientific inquiry. If current global performance indicators are anything to go by, the majority of universities in the continent would be classified as 'underdeveloped'. How then do we expect an underdeveloped agent to perform the miracles of development?

Fourthly, it may not be fair to suggest that universities in the continent have not assisted their own countries in pursuing the goals of development of some kind. What they have perhaps failed to do is to continuously redefine the goals of development in line with changing national imperatives and global conditions, and to reflect these changes in curricula change. A useful starting point in redefining the roles of universities in Africa would be to assess their current offerings and research directions against the challenges facing the continent.

If we agree that development constitutes any diverse and multifaceted process of a predominantly positive change in the quality of life of individuals and society, in both material and non-material respects, universities in the continent and elsewhere cannot, and should not, be restricted to performing one function, even in terms of development paradigms.

## ***Alinah K Segobye***

### **What does a university mean in Africa?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Africa is unique in that it is a continent with some of the oldest innovations in science and technology (literacy – for example, Egyptian and Nubian civilizations) and one of the last to realize an uptake in literacy for its citizenry. That said, Africa's illiterate millions are

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

**Does the African university have the capacity to transform itself?**

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

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

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

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

### **What future directions for the African university?**

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

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

## **Crain Soudien**

Towards assessing the promise of ICTs in solving issues of human resource development, this presentation looks at the development of this platform in African Higher Education. It begins with a general overview of key issues that have emerged in relation to ICTs and higher education and extracts the key issue of ICT use for detailed attention. It draws on the preliminary findings of a current study on the use of ICTs in the Social Sciences in South African higher education to develop a comment about the possibilities and difficulties that come with the use of the technology.

A central plank of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a development initiative of South Africa, Algeria and Nigeria, is poverty reduction, bridging the education gap and reversing the brain drain (Borishade 2002:13). In terms of this NEPAD has targeted human resource development as an area of focus. In contrast to previous strategies for dealing with human resource development, which placed emphasis on basic education, the NEPAD Council has made it clear that it is also interested in the development of high-level capacity, and so has called on the higher education sector to play a leading role in this process. In diagnosing the problems of the sector it has come to focus on questions of access (NEPAD Council, Commission of Education, <http://nepadcouncil.org/educomm/index.php?ID=16>). In order to promote access, and thereby assist towards the revitalization of the African university, the Council, not unexpectedly, has set its sights on the expansion of ICT provision. ICT provision, the argument goes, will enhance the prospects – particularly through cross-border provision – for opening up and expanding access, building capacity, sharing leadership and improve research capacity (*ibid*). This ambition has been echoed in several other quarters. A recent UNESCO conference in Nairobi on Accreditation, Quality Assurance and Recognition of Qualifications (Okebukola 2006:4), for example, passed the following resolution: 'Cognisant of the fact that it is through the use of open, distance and technology-mediated learning that the huge unmet demand for higher education can be addressed.' The African Virtual University (AVU), established by the World Bank in 1997, similarly promises students who have struggled to gain access elsewhere 'the best education available from the top universities worldwide. By enrolling in our programs, you have access to the same world-class education offered in Australia, Canada, America or Europe' (<http://www.avu.org/wstudy.asp>).

Clearly, as the initial success of the AVU suggests – 27,000 students enrolled since 1997 and a raft of testimonials on a web page (see <http://www.avu.org/testimonials.asp>) – ICT has an important role to play in assisting the continent with its challenges around human resource development. There are however, enough reasons to pause before the conclusion is drawn that ICTs are resolving the continent's capacity development problems. Oketch (2004:18-19), for example, has argued that the World Bank and others involved in establishing AVU have not recognized the contextual complexity of establishing a virtual university in Africa. 'Is ... Africa ready and in need of such a university?' he asks (*ibid.*). Seeing signs of an early demise or less pessimistically the shrinking of the initiative down to a non-governmental initiative, he suggests that those involved in the planning did not know how best to use technology to expand access

to tertiary education in either 1997 or in the current period. Adeya (2001), in a review of over 162 articles, studies and papers on ICTs in Africa, comes to a similar conclusion and asks the question ‘What evidence is there for the potential of ICTs to assist in Africa’s development?’ The nub of her enquiry pivots on the question of use. In showing that that ICT development has tended to focus on applications in libraries, information services and local publishing (Adeya, 2001:11), (she shows also that only 19 university libraries outside of South Africa, that were heavily dependent on donor aid, were able to produce any practical plans for the financial sustainability of their services), she indicates that many countries have over-emphasized the number of ICTs they have access to. What they have not been able to show ‘is a clear indication of who is using them and for what. This is a necessary requirement if one is to measure productivity and the impact of ICTs on development (Adeya, 2001:18). In the absence of this – what she calls an empirical vacuum – we will be held hostage ‘by unsubstantiated claims as to the opportunities and threats posed by the information society, obfuscating in-depth analysis of the realities’ (*ibid.*: 17).

As significant higher education commentators such as Marginson (2003:5) argue, and he is talking to a developed world context, we need to be alert to the fact that electronic learning ‘poses a new and difficult set of problems for educators and governments, problems both political and pedagogical.’ As the reviews of Oketch and Adeya indicate, there are problems of expense and convenience, and critically, issues of quality. The former are issues that have been addressed widely, specifically as they relate to NEPAD (see, for example, Southern African Regional Poverty Network, 2002, [http://www.sarpn.org.za/NEPAD/april2002/canada/page\\_c.php](http://www.sarpn.org.za/NEPAD/april2002/canada/page_c.php)), but it is to the issue of use, raised by Adeya (pertinently in the context of quality), that our attention needs to turn.

In terms of the concern about use, the preliminary findings of a Mellon Foundation-funded research project at the University of Cape Town are relevant. The project was initially constituted as an evaluation of the use of a computer-based teaching programme for demography at the University of KwaZulu-Natal but was expanded to look at how ICTs were being used in the social sciences in South African universities. A survey was conducted in eight universities encompassing the spectrum of different kinds of higher education institutions (historically advantaged, historically disadvantaged etc) in 45 social science departments.

The findings of the study are significant across a range of significant variables. Broadly they show, *inter alia*, that:

- Social science academics used email most extensively (90%), followed by Microsoft Office (83%) and the Internet (74%). There were large differences between the institutions in terms of internet use and little in terms of email or Microsoft.
- For teaching and learning, 86% said that they used ICTs. When analyzed more carefully, it became clear that more advanced applications were not used significantly, with economics and geography indicating the highest use of course web pages (26% and 27% respectively).
- The most common purposes for using ICTs in teaching and learning were course administration (89%) and promoting independent learning (77%).

- 54% of the respondents indicated that they had used ICTs successfully.
- Most success was achieved with email (65%), digital projection (62%) and online sources (50%).
- Least success was achieved with collaborative writing environments (1%), text analysis tools (5%), file-sharing portfolios (5%) and webcasts of lecturers (7%).
- Student factors appear to be the biggest case for lack of success of use of ICTs for teaching and learning (89% citing copying from the web, and 74% saying that students didn't have sufficient literacy skill).

Important vectors to distinguish in the study include institutional profiles of use, answering precisely what Adeya (2001) called for. While it is difficult at this point to make definitive statements, the study is beginning to show important institutional differences which relate to their historical context and important disciplinary differences. These are important in beginning to address the questions of the promise that ICTs hold as a teaching and learning platform. They suggest that possibilities for promoting access do exist, but they also point to the significant difficulties that arise in putting these to use.

## ***Ibrahima Thiaw***

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

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

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

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

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

However, I am surprised that Juma considers curriculum change alone as the cure-all. Implementing the cure is no simple affair. How are we to design new curriculum in a context where research is stagnant and the teaching load is overwhelming? Research is too often carried out on an individual basis, and the evaluation of research and teaching is particularly poor. Additionally, research infrastructures are often obsolete, inadequate, or simply inexistent. How are we to deal with the extremely high number of student enrolments and renewing our aging faculty? How are we to stop the brain drain? How are we to re-deploy or absorb the already educated but unemployed population in new sectors of the economy?

Many African countries have spent billions educating a mass of students that have ended

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Nicolas Vigaud**

### **The University in Africa – A student's output**

*'From the universities must come men, ideas, knowledge, experience, technical skills, and the deep human understanding vital to fruitful relations among nations. Without these, world order for which we have so long strived, cannot be established.'* Haile Selassie

Once institutions dedicated to producing civil servants, the realities and issues within the continent have led universities to rethink higher education, seeing it as an even more stimulant and extraordinary tool for societies' development today. This is the context in which Professor Juma's article is situated. In reaction to Juma's statement on universities in Africa, the discussions at UCT brought forth many points. I choose to refer to two of them: the nature and state of the university in Africa and the part given to globalization versus locality in its future development.

First of all, defining the nature of the university in Africa is a primary step prior towards defining any vision. Simplistically, one could define a university through three components: two of them reflecting the human factor, say staff and students, the other carving out the nature, the ways and specificity of teaching and research, i.e. its local context. Thus arises the question of the nature of the environment of the university in Africa; only then can we, in my view, assess its position.

Defining teaching in an African university is highly dependent on the location and naturally quite different from Northern academic experiences. The number of students, the opportunities, the material conditions, not to mention fees, funding and remuneration are only a few of the differences. All these elements engender an endemic setting for a lecturer or student.

A friend of mine, a lecturer in mathematics in an African university, was explaining to me that he had not given his own courses for few weeks, principally because he had not received any salary for the previous six months. Coping, financially, with this situation saw him busy with two or three other jobs, which left him little classroom time for his students. Fantasy? No. This is his reality, as it is for others at his university, in his country and the continent at large. What of the students, then? In such contexts, to which one can add overloaded classrooms, would a student consider himself as a future catalyst of research and education, a product for the development of his beloved country, or would he rather study to ensure his own individual success? I think the answer is obvious.

Societal realities often reflect political policies, from which educational perspectives also emerge, and they largely explain how and why a student chooses to educate himself. This might sound trivial but this is day-to-day life. In this respect, Juma's emphasis on curriculum change would seem to be far from pivotal when considering the development of the university in Africa. My feeling is that direct material empowerment on-site, as opposed to distant and inadequate conceptual 'accounting', is one of the necessities for any further discussion on high education in Africa. It emphasizes the importance of local environment and causes, which sets up the scene for and necessity of epistemic decolonization. This notion, brought forth during the colloquium, is key to getting to the real state and potential developments of the university in Africa.

Africa in all its multiplicity cannot be approached at large, treated as a single entity to which alien principles, concepts and mechanisms can be applied or adapted. Realizing this is a condition of any safe and successful process, including epistemic decolonization. That Juma's views do not necessarily capture this is perhaps a simple reality. To give an example, it might be difficult to plan, in the context of higher education, any extensive IT project – even in a brand-new university equipped with powerful computers – if there are i) prolonged power cuts in the locality and ii) no secondary self-generating sources of electricity available.

To me, local inspiration but not transposition is both necessary and needed. Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the father of Afro-beat, sang '*Teacher, don't teach me non-sense, who you teach today a go die tomorrow*'. Indigenous knowledge is both natural and nourishing: a community grows first locally from its own realities and experiences, in order to develop relevant focuses and approaches. We should think similarly about the idea of conceptualizing a new university for Africa. An analogy to geometry is instructive here: Thales's and Pythagoras's theorems are taught in classrooms, but geometry and its founding principles from which Greek mathematicians inspired themselves were already known in Egypt 1500 before them. Although this does not alter the content of the formulas it does give them an essence of universality through multiplicity and origins. The same can be applied to the idea of re-conceptualizing the university in Africa using the still-adequate in-house concept of plurality in its thinking, reality in its methods and architecture: it is an old resident within the continent!

Another thematic of interest is that of globalization versus locality, whose 'scaling' (to me) contains keys for the development of higher education in Africa as a real and powerful tool for the African society. This emerges as a central theme for the university in Africa and needs our full and sincere attention if we are to consider and understand the position of the university in Africa and in the world.

Globalization itself brings in the notion of curriculum. But what is globalization when it comes to knowledge? A unique soup without flavour where all is lost at once, or a collective table covered with the best plates we each know where the recipe is shared? To African knowledge, if it is considered human heritage, globalization poses little threat: having its own conscience, it can no longer be taken away from its roots. As to the rest, can't we think of global knowledge simply as basics, basics for different common subjects to be taught, or for bases for research and development? Higher education implies research and development and a necessity to reach international standards, both for international recognition but for internal satisfaction from within the student population, thus developing a full – exterior and interior – dynamic. Thus, I think this globality of knowledge can be accepted and exist as but a step; development itself has to be local in terms of the thematic, ways and people involved. In this context, links with the local community at all levels are the unique guarantees to setting relevant targets and to ensuring dynamics in high education, research evolution and development in the community.

In many languages one comes across the saying '*knowledge is power*', but the language in which this knowledge is transmitted can make a big difference. In terms of equity of access, there is a need for primary education to address linguistic multiplicity. For higher

education, most publications that constitute the foundation of some disciplines are still only available in English. I believe the redeeming notion of language multiplicity loses a bit of its meaning, in a way. The separation of the academic world from the society is also an expression of the divide between globalization and locality, which can sometimes be seen in the decoupling between poverty outside the gates of a university and the boiling will of individual success inside. The Westernized image of scholars and how they are perceived sometimes only reflects a will, perhaps sculpted by dreams and realities, of getting an education abroad.

Finally, I turn to my own example to illustrate this further. I am French, a doctorate candidate at the Department of Oceanography, University of Cape Town. Since 1988 I have spent increasing periods of time in Africa, West Africa in particular, living and working. As you might feel, my opinions have been shaped by my experiences – I am far from being a specialist in the development of higher education in Africa! I am studying the Southern African climate and I came to South Africa as it was clear to me that geographic proximity was compulsory, being relevant for more realism and implications – the ‘cultural perspective’. Now finishing my PhD, I am willing more than ever to continue towards an Africa-centred thematic, typically extending my studies to ocean-air-land mechanisms and feedback with regards to rising food issues in Africa. For me, the best perspective is to gain experience in other laboratories.

When I graduate, I will still be a young scientist, and I feel I need to extend and increase my knowledge, learning new techniques, using new tools, and then applying them to African thematic. I also hope to teach. In this regard, the best for me is to stay in the South, but to perhaps move continents in order to avail myself of better opportunities. This saddens me a lot, but I hope come back to Africa, to be a link for knowledge exchange, a bridge within. I think this is also true of some African students in African universities, who, when finishing their undergraduate studies, set themselves upon a quest for postgraduate opportunities through existing projects within the university, which are sometimes Western-centred projects, or even located overseas, in other universities out of the continent. *A quoi bon!* I would say in French: why ‘waste’ all this education on students who then fly away? Will they come back? This is but a question of opportunities.

Regarding my own experience, I believe in the university in Africa, and I am ready to invigorate where I can; I am convinced the best thing is to be and interact as a link. More globally, regarding research and higher education, external project-funding, as well as overseas training, all are opportunities for development. These, however, are not the only factors; there are also the long-term implications. These are what really matter. I am waiting for the university in Africa not ‘to run like a rat in the wheel’ but rather in its own fields, to be free to think and focus its priorities with multiplicity and with its people. First of all this university needs the necessary inflow to ‘globalize’ its means, its actors, its potentials and then its freedom of movement.

## ***Vanessa Watson***

### **Considering the role of the Centre for Cities in Africa in relation to debates about the role of universities in this context**

(In this short statement I will respond to the position of Calestous Juma, aligning myself with the position set out by Anthony Bogues)

Broadly, there can be no doubt that universities (everywhere) should be concerned about the context in which they are located, and that particularly those disciplines which are professionally oriented should actively seek to engage with the problems and issues of that context. It is difficult to accept the argument that seems to be made by Juma that entire universities, and all the departments within them, should necessarily have to focus their activities in this kind of way. Universities benefit in all kinds of ways from the diversity of their offerings, which in turn opens up the possibilities of inter- and trans-disciplinary work.

It is also difficult to accept what seems to be the ‘two world’ assumption embedded in Juma’s article, that the ‘developing’ world, including Africa, is experiencing a distinct set of problems and issues separate from, and not necessarily connected to, the ‘developed world’. It is fairly common cause now that while there are strong contextual differences in the way in which people experience, understand and respond to the kind of developmental problems which Juma has in mind, there are also significant commonalities between regions with well-performing economies and those with less well-performing ones. One effect of globalization is that there has been an increase in income inequalities, unemployment and the casualization of employment in both ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ nations. Cultural and social divides can be as deep in London as they are in Lagos, and cities are increasingly spatially divided and fragmented in all parts of the world, experiencing problems of social exclusion, environmental degradation and escalating crime and violence. Why universities in contexts such as Africa and other ‘developing’ regions should focus their efforts on these issues and not universities everywhere is not clear.

There is also an implicit assumption evident in Juma’s article that the market will solve the ‘developmental’ problems of poorer nations: students should be taught how to do agri-business or business incubation or manage tourists; development simply requires ‘technical competence’ to design and manage infrastructure; and more penetration by the World Bank and partners (!). Even elements in the World Bank are now shifting to the position that the market will not solve all.

Thinking in relation to the work of a Centre for Cities in Africa could be said to draw from the Aristotelian notion that there are three kinds of knowledge:

- Episteme – scientific knowledge, universal, invariable, context-independent
- Techne – Pragmatic, technical, oriented towards production, driven by practical instrumental rationality
- Phronesis – Ethics, deliberation about values with reference to praxis, context-dependent, based on practical value-rationality, concerned with how deliberation about values and interests shape the allocation of public

resources, about who gets what, how and when – the key issues relating to the planning and management of the built environment.

All these three forms of knowledge are closely interlinked and cannot be separated. Phronesis draws on both theory – episteme – (including theories of ethics) and a deep understanding of context to produce technical solutions (techne). Juma, from a neoliberal position, assumes that the only rationality that should drive decision-making and action is that of the market, and that values and ethics do not require debate or reflection. And it is therefore quite acceptable for him to separate out techne and make this the task of universities in Africa. But how can ‘development’ be taken forward without a questioning of the ethics and judgments that shape it? This exploration is certainly not part of techne. Bogues quite correctly raises questions about African philosophy at African universities, and it would hardly make sense to explore African philosophy (and ethics) in isolation from theories of philosophy more generally and in other parts of the world. Any university that attempted to separate these integrally related elements of knowledge and apply only one (techne) would be intellectually impoverished.

The position taken in the Cities in Africa project is that many of the problems of cities on the continent stem from an inappropriate application of ‘solutions’ from other parts of the world (and usually the global North). In other words, the requirements of phronesis – for an understanding of both values and the deep complexities of context – are missing. In many instances this has been because of assumptions of value neutrality and an overriding faith in the ‘market’, following Juma’s position. Our argument is not that one should reject ideas, technologies or ‘best practice’ from other parts of the world simply because they are not African, but rather that what is needed is an exploration of the ‘interface’ between these technologies and the context of the African continent, so as to gain an understanding of how a better ‘articulation’ between the two can be achieved. This will require an examination of some of the fundamental assumptions underlying these ideas and solutions which often claim universality – Bogues points to the importance of this when he discusses his exploration of Rawlsian conceptions of justice in Jamaica with his students.

Our position is that this interface between techno-administrative urban systems and the ‘everyday’ lives of urban citizens is shaped by power and struggle and the issues of values (and whose values) and knowledge (and whose knowledge) becomes fundamental. An example of this kind of conflict can be seen in present South African housing policy which claims the aim of eradicating informal settlements and providing shelter for all. But because the policy fails to understand the depth and complexity of poverty, it delivers this shelter in the form of projects such as the N2 Gateway, which succeed in displacing well-located shack-dwellers to the outer edge of the city as most cannot afford the costs of formal shelter.

Broadly then, the argument would be that technical knowledge and theoretical or scientific knowledge are closely interrelated, with the question of values forming an important part of that link. To call on universities in Africa to focus entirely on technical knowledge in the way that Juma suggests indicates a profound lack of insight.

## ***Nana Wilson-Tagoe***

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

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

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

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

### **The diversification of university curricula**

This is crucial. We must not let the logic of visible technological transformations determine our course offerings. How we see ourselves – our history, our accumulated thinking and our new post-colonial aspirations – as Africans should be part of our new

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

### **Experimentation with varied modes of teaching**

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

### **Different kinds of universities**

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

### **External links with diaspora scholars**

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

on Africa to the continent, as was the practice in the 1960s.

### **Funding, fund-raising and income-generation for universities**

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

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

## References

- Ajayi, J.F.A., Goma, L.K.H and G.A. Johnson (1996) *The African Experience with Higher Education*. Accra: The Association of African Universities, p. 235.
- ASSAF (2004) *Promoting South African S & T Capacities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. From Policy to Reality*. Academy of Science of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Ashcroft, Bill (2001) *Post-colonial Transformation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bamgbose, A. (2000) 'International Association for World Englishes (IAWE) and World Englishes: "Which Way Forward?"' In Smith, L.E. and M. L. Forman (eds) (2000) *World Englishes 2000*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press: pp. 204-208.
- Benjamin, Jessica (1988) *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*. New York: Pantheon.
- Bennett, Jane (2006) 'Rejecting Roses: introductory notes on pedagogies and sexualities'. In *Agenda* (67) pp. 68-79.
- Bokamba, and J.S. Tlou (1980) 'The consequences of the language policies of African states vis-à-vis education'. In K. Mateene (ed.) (1980) *Reconsideration of African Linguistic policies*. Kampala: O.A.U, Bureau of Languages, pp. 45-66.
- Brown, L. Susan (1993) *The Politics of Individualism*. Quebec and New York: Black Rose.
- Case, J. (2006) *Issues facing engineering education in South Africa*, 3rd African Regional Conference on Engineering Education, Pretoria, 26-27 September, 2006.
- Chinsamy-Turan, A. (2003) 'The Status of Women in Science in South Africa'. In *Proceedings of the Pan African Workshop*, (1999), Nairobi, Kenya, pp. 18- 23.
- Chinsamy-Turan, A. (2006) 'Fostering a scientific culture in society' in *Proceedings of the 9<sup>th</sup> Public Communication of Science and Technology Conference*, Seoul, Korea.
- DACTS (Department of Science and Technology) (1996) White Paper on Science and Technology, Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- Department of Science and Technology (DST) (2005) *Science and Technology in South Africa. Progress and Achievements in the First Decade of Democracy (1994–2004)*. Department of Science and Technology.
- Dua, H. (1994) *Hegemony of English*. Mysore: Yashoda.
- ECSA & EASA (1995). Joint submission to the National Commission on Higher Education by the Engineering Council of South Africa and the Engineering Association of South Africa.
- Fafunwa, B.A. (1990) 'Using national language in education: A challenge to African educators'. In Unesco-Unicef, (1990) *African thoughts on the prospects of education for all*. Selection from papers Commissioned for the Regional Consultation on Education for All, Dakar, 27-30 November 1989: pp. 97-110.
- InterAcademy Council (IAC) Report, *Inventing a Better Future – A strategy for building worldwide capacities in Science and Technology*.

- Juma, C. (2006) *We need to reinvent the African University*, see [www.SciDev.net](http://www.SciDev.net).
- Kahn, T. (1997) 'Engineering under stress'. In *Mail & Guardian*, 25-31 July 1997.
- Manuel, T., (2006) Speech delivered to Engineering students at the University of Cape Town, 'The Role of Engineers in South Africa', 31 August 2006.
- Mazrui, A.M. (1996) 'Language policy and the foundation of democracy: an African perspective'. In *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (118) pp. 107-124.
- Mehta, Uday Singh (1999) *Liberalism and Empire*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Ministry of Education (2002) *National Language Policy for Higher Education*. Pretoria.
- Ngugi wa Thiongo (1986) *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African Literature*. London: James Currey; Nairobi. Heinemann.
- Rich, Paul (1984) *White Power and the Liberal Conscience: racial segregation and South African liberalism 1921-60*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- SARG (South African Reference Group on Women in Science and Technology) (2004) *Facing the Facts. Women's participation in Science, Engineering and Technology*. National Advisory Council on Innovation (NACI) and Department of Science and Technology.
- Steyn, Melissa (2001) 'Whiteness just isn't what it used to be': *White Identity in a Changing South Africa*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- UNESCO (2003) *Education in a multilingual world*. See [www.unesco.org/education](http://www.unesco.org/education).
- Wooldridge, A. (2006) The Battle for brainpower. A survey of talent. In *The Economist*, 7 October 2006.

## The University in Africa – the Debate

### Looking inwards at the nature of the university in Africa

**Moderator: Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan, Professor of Zoology, UCT**

#### PRESENTATIONS

**Anthony Bogue:** We can conceptualize the project of the university in Africa as ‘epistemic decolonization’. This requires us to reach beyond the assumptions of language, and to see how the universal is constituted in the local through the construction of cultural categories and classificatory systems of knowledge. Our administrative systems must then follow and support this process.

**Dan Izevbaye:** Africa has no dearth of imagination and creativity. Our problem is rather that these opportunities are crushed by the weight of external forces. This is shown in the history of the university in West Africa (for example, Ibadan). Following independence, the university was crushed by structural readjustment and the consequences of currency devaluation, which rendered books and equipment unaffordable. As a result, the investment in staff development merely equipped West African academics to attain jobs in the west and the north once they were forced out of Nigeria by the lack of resources.

**Jane Bennett:** We need to understand the complex micropolitics of the university, and the relationship between the body of the individual and the wider enterprise. If we do not understand the relationship between the individual and the general in this way, then there is a danger of reinscribing dominance through the discourse of development. Bogue is right to stress the need for epistemic decolonization: without this, we will not be able to resist these new discourses of domination.

**Ibrahima Thiaw:** It is essential for the university to respond to its context, which is the community, and scholars need to get close to their communities and build mutual trust. The university in Africa needs to interpret the global for such local communities, respecting and supporting the strength of local cultures.

**Alison Lewis:** Engineering is about solving problems and, as such, Engineers are experts at using global solutions to solve local problems. A key issue for the university in Africa is the challenge of understanding local conditions and turning problem solving abilities to good effect.

**Mbulungeni Madiba:** Language is the key to the development of the university in Africa. Africa has more than 2000 languages – a huge resource – and yet no university teaches in an indigenous language. As the world becomes more global, these local issues of language are attracting attention in many other parts of the world as well, with a key connection to issues of identity. The solution lies in a regional approach, using sets of language in a complimentary manner to enrich identity and facilitate access and improved success rates for university learners.

**Sam Raditlhalo:** The key issues of identity and language can be developed further. How can the question of identity be made meaningful using local resources? Cuba provides a strong mode – a country with limited resources that has forged a strong

sense of national identity in the interests of epistemic decolonization. Universities need to review what has been achieved, and ask what it means to be a zone of privilege in a sea of poverty.

## DISCUSSION

**Carolyn Hamilton:** Epistemic decolonization is indeed a key issue, and at the centre of this is the issue of indigenous knowledge, and how we can engage with indigenous knowledge with an appropriate intellectual agenda. We need to understand how colonialism effaced and appropriated indigenous knowledge, and how indigenous knowledge was packed into the colonial archive.

**Nan Warner:** Perhaps we need to step back to a prior question, and again ask the question, what is a university? How is knowledge created in the university? We need to understand that our institutions are products of our economies – we do not lack knowledge, but rather lack capacity.

**Brenda Cooper:** Africa – and the university in Africa – has to be understood in relation to the African diaspora. We need to look beyond the colonial archive, and to understand how the episteme that we are intent on de-colonizing relates to intellectuals of the diaspora, and their work.

**John Higgins:** We need to engage with a paradox. In discussions such as these ‘science’ and its language is alienated the discourse and yet, at the same, positions such as those developed by Juma privilege science and technology. In their turn, the critical humanities are alienated from the discourse of development, and yet are central to understanding and interpreting the role of the university. The result is an elision which leaves no place for effective mediation between, for example, the local and the global, and other discourses. The classic example here is AIDS, which cannot be effective science unless the cultural context of the epidemic is placed right at the centre of the debate. This elision and its consequences is the central paradox of the university as an institution, everywhere.

**Nana Wilson-Tagoe:** A key issue for the university in Africa is opening the space for different forms of knowledge, within Africa, about Africa and in the African diaspora.

**Dan Izevbaye:** There is a myth – which may be partly true – that these forms of knowledge about Africa are best developed and executed in the West, outside Africa, by those in the African diaspora. This may render those in the diaspora both the agents, and the victims, of the west.

**Geri Augusto:** In studying Africa, and connecting the African diaspora with the continent, it is often assumed that ICT is a neutral medium, redolent with possibility. However, we need to understand ICT as a medium structured in the interests of the west, with its own epistemology.

**Anthony Bogues:** ‘African experts’ in the north and west tend to marginalize the continent, portraying it in terms of pathologies of development. The discourse of the university in Africa needs to work against this tendency.

**Bella Mukonyora:** We need to be careful about concepts such as epistemologies and indigenous knowledge, and rather think in terms of scholarship. African scholars should inhabit western ways of knowing, and turn these to advantage.

**Alinah Segobye:** How does the local withstand the force of the global, and how does the university assert itself in the face of the force of the global? In order to make best use of our opportunities for research and teaching within Africa, we need infrastructure and resources. How can we learn from the histories of our universities as we try to re-invent them? We need to come to terms with these histories and their lessons before we turn to the work of re-inventing the university in Africa? Can the pen ever be more powerful than the rifle?

**Crain Soudien:** Beware of binaries, since they disguise the complexities of real situations. The current epistemology of the north and the west is fractured within itself, and we need to take this into account in any politics of knowledge. We need to understand how Africa has 'stepped into modernity', and confront the complexity of issues.

**Lungisile Ntsebeza:** In thinking about the university in Africa, it is useful to use the device of distinguishing between structure and agency. Is the issue of the brain drain – the diaspora – really the issue, or is it rather a matter of political will – as Sam Raditlhalo has asserted, using the example of Cuba. Looked at from this perspective, is the issue not how we enter the space of balancing the global and the local, how we build local culture from global materials. What is the role of the university is providing a location for these debates?

**Ibrahima Thiaw:** Identity is a mark of empowerment – we should not underestimate the potential we have in Africa to appropriate and interpret global knowledge in our own way.

**Elom Dovo:** In understanding the university, we need to look at how knowledge is distributed within the institution – the balance between undergraduate and postgraduate study. How can universities increase their potential for knowledge production, and promote interdisciplinarity across courses?

**Maano Ramutsindela:** What are the colonial traces that worry us in our universities, and are local and global mutually exclusive categories? Strong leadership can overcome these binaries – political will is essential.

**Bella Mukonyora:** Again – be careful about 'indigenous knowledge' and the way that this concept can be misappropriated. A good example in Zimbabwe, where indigenous knowledge has been used to construct Shona identity and support political violence. The concept of indigenous knowledge can be retrogressive.

**Natasha Distiller:** We agree that the question of identity is central. But we must also remember that identities are contested, and that we should avoid the dangers of binaries. We are dealing with complex, post-colonial formulations.

**Sam Raditlhalo:** African culture has a unity behind its superficial differences. A key issue is 'what do we do for Africa', rather than the matter of 'being African'. India

has this right – Indians can be Indians in the world and then go back to India, still as Indians. Why can this not also be the case for Africa?

**Martin Hall:** How can we connect John Higgins' insight – that there is an elision at the point where science and technology should connect with the critical humanities – with Alison Lewis's question for Engineering, seeking to connect global solutions with local problems?

**Geri Augusto:** One way of making such a connection is through the concept of a 'portal course', at the heart of the university. Rather than a structured curriculum, this would be a space for creative dialogue across the fields and disciplines of the university, for example on the theme of 'medical dilemmas'. Such a portal course would be transdisciplinary, and would assist epistemic decolonization by escaping the conventional boxes of the curriculum. In ways such as these, we need to decolonize methodologies as well as working to decolonizing content.

**Brenda Cooper:** The concept of a portal course is exciting, and its challenges can be illustrated by practical case studies, such as the experience of designing a curriculum for Electrical Engineers at UCT, required to understand 'Africa' for the purposes of professional accreditation. We need to look at the details of such curricula – at what works, and what does not.

**Nana Wilson-Tagoe:** Developing courses such as these is helped by a clear focus on the objectives that are intended – at the outputs. We may need to challenge and change institutional structures to achieve this.

**Crain Soudien:** In thinking about the university in Africa, we must recognize that globalization is already in charge – we do not have the opportunity of retreating into the local, and we must engage with the forces of globalization. A striking example of this was a recent student initiative at UCT – 'the Wall' – in which student societies focussed on the conflict in Palestine and human rights issues, hotly debated in the local context of the Western Cape as people forge complex identities.

**Bella Mukonyora:** We can relate this global world to the local through the things we teach – for example, religion. By using scholarship in this way, we can bring the global into the local.

**Anthony Bagues:** But we also need to take into account the realities of power, and develop new teaching methodologies to approach this task.

**Dan Izevbaye:** The ideal of the university centres on knowledge. Rather than thinking in terms of a complex conspiracy against the university in Africa, we rather need to recognize that knowledge always works in the interests of those who create it. Therefore the key issue is Africa's relationship with the west, and the question is what we do about this. There may well be an African archive, but we are denied access to it by material disadvantage, by our practical inability to build links between universities in Africa. The key issue is resources – of gaining the means to access the archive and to create knowledge in our own interests.

## **Positions from the world**

**Moderator: Thandabantu Nhlapo, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, UCT**

### **PRESENTATIONS**

**Melvin Ayogu:** We can think of the university as an ‘empty box’. In populating this, we need to start with the incentives for staff and students – rather than epistemological issues, we should rather think in terms of the mechanisms by which we make choices. What are the incentives for academics? How can we shape the agenda for making choices?

**Geri Augusto:** Universities need to challenge received hierarchies, connect learning to life, develop a transdisciplinary focus. Universities need to negotiate the terms that connect the local and the global.

**Crain Soudien:** Ideas about ICT are at the centre of discussions about the future of the University in Africa – about the ways that we build connections. However, we need to be cautious, to look at the ways in which information technology is actually used by academics and students across a range of different disciplinary contexts. There is a tendency to ‘talk up’ information technology in universities, but is this sustainable?

**Maano Ramutsindela:** Is ‘development’ the appropriate discourse for thinking about the future of the university in Africa, or is Juma taking us down the wrong road? Rather than the concept of a ‘development university’, we need to look more carefully about what we have already – the roles that universities already play in supporting and promoting development. How do we make use of the knowledge that we already have, and how do we think of, and define the role of the academic in this context?

**Alinah K. Segobye:** What role can Archaeology play in development? The discipline is often thought of as unconnected to current challenges and issues. However, disciplines such as these can be effective in opening up new sources of knowledge, addressing key issues of identity and heritage. Rather than a narrow development agenda, we need to look at the strengths and opportunities in all our disciplines.

**Lungisile Ntsebeza:** A question – is there anything different about the university in Africa, or are universities in Africa like universities everywhere? In addition, there are great variabilities in the forms of functions of universities within Africa – between different countries, and within countries such as South Africa (note the difference between historically black and historically white universities). The challenge for a university such as UCT is to find ways in which the university can both continue to do what it does well, and at the same time open up its resources for those who are marginalized and excluded. In doing this, we need to unpack what we mean by ‘development’. Is this to be understood in the ways defined by the World Bank (following Juma)? Or should we rather challenge some of the assumptions that this model makes about the role of the private sector? We should counter Juma with Zelesa, who insists on the role of the university as the location for the production of critical knowledge.

**Nana Wilson-Tagoe:** We need to be sure not to leave ourselves vulnerable to global forces. The university must be a place of critical reflection.

## **DISCUSSION**

**Martin Hall:** How can Geri Augusto's concept of 'disastrous opportunities' be further developed as an organizing idea for the university in Africa?

**Geri Augusto:** Disastrous opportunities – such as the creative possibilities that opened up for Brown in building connections with south in the wake of Hurricane Katrina – can be conceptualized in terms of power. Used correctly, they can be used as a way of negotiating recovery and therefore changing the nature of public discourse.

**Melvin Ayogu:** Through all this, though, we need to remember the centrality of fundamental research. This should be the core function of the university, wherever it is located.

**Maano Ramutsindela:** There are key opportunities for such fundamental research, and important opportunities for engagement with communities to develop these opportunities.

**John Higgins:** But the concept of 'community' needs to be unpacked. The need to offer service to the community is constantly repeated in discussions about the role of the university in Africa, creating the illusion that, presently, universities do not provide services to the community. But is this the case? One of the key functions of the university is to replicate professional classes, and universities are constantly doing this already. The push for 'service to the community' puts at risk the other central function of the university – to serve as a site for critical reflection.

## **Summary**

**Joe Muller, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Humanities, UCT**

In summing up, we can see the value of Juma's paper as restoring the visibility of a number of key issues for the university in Africa. His key strategy, I think, is to ask us to think of our future as more in alignment with the private sector than with the state. This is a matter of survival – without resources, the university cannot reproduce itself. And the university has to engage with development, and set the terms for this engagement. In considering this, we have addressed a number of issues. Firstly, we have talked a lot about the role of the Humanities. Certainly, the Humanities, and critical enquiry, are important. But we must also remember that there are different forms of 'knowledge work'. Science and Engineering work within differing paradigms of knowledge – different languages. If we fail to recognize this, we will not grasp the larger project of the university in Africa. Secondly, we need to spend more time thinking about the appropriate role of the state in the future of the university. Thirdly, and as Juma is saying, what about money? How are universities to maintain or enhance a space of critical enquiry if there are not the resources to do so? Fourth, and as discussed here, what about the export of brain power – the relationship with the wider world? Should the university in Africa be built around the realities of centre and periphery, and the movement of human capital?

## **Johan Muller: The University in Africa - an Endnote**

Calestous Juma's paper on the need to re-invent the African university was an inspired choice for launching a discussion on the future of the university in Africa because of his admirable clarity in laying out the conditions for its survival. The university, he argues, must turn away from its primary orientation to the state and the requirements of the civil service, and re-orient itself towards the development of the economy via strategic partnerships with the private sector as well as with the state. This re-orientation would serve a dual purpose: first, to grow the economy by providing relevant skills; secondly, to help finance the university in a period of a steady decrease in the provision of public money for higher education. Although many feel repelled by this rather blunt utilitarianism, this position on the university's role, albeit without much nuance in this version, is recognisably the same as that of other commentators like Manuel Castells, whose depiction of universities as 'engines of development' Juma has adopted. Juma thus reminds us that universities can no longer expect to depend on the usual state patronage, and will, so to speak, have to learn to sing for their supper. The best form of singing, for Juma as for Castells, is to align strategically with the development path of the region or the state.

If Juma's clarion call can be condensed into the question 'what about economic development?', then the responses in this symposium can be considered as a series of oblique answers, or more accurately, counter-questions. The most commonly asked counter-question was undoubtedly, 'what about the Humanities?', hardly surprising considering the provenance of most of the symposium attendees, and the rather minimal role the developmental mission accords the disciplines dedicated to inner cultivation. This is a two-edged blade: there is as little talk of development in Humanities discourses as there is of humanising cultivation in development discourse. Consequently much of the discussion in this vein went on to discuss various humanising possibilities for the Humanities in the African university, without much reference to development, except to decry its reductiveness and utilitarianism. The discussion thus recapitulated the traditional gulf and tension between the Humanities on the one hand, and science and technology on the other.

What is the nature of this tension? Why do the disciplines differ so markedly despite periodic calls for rapprochement? One reason is that their respective styles of argument and contestation are quite different. To see why this is so, it is instructive to recall Thomas Kuhn's distinction between what he called 'paradigmatic' disciplines – classically the sciences, and the 'non' or 'pre-paradigmatic' disciplines – classically the Humanities. The principal advantage provided by a paradigm is that it furnishes a single intellectual framework within which problems and what counts as answers to them can be commonly agreed upon. Since paradigmatic disciplines aim at universality, contestation within them is directed towards seeking integration at a higher level of synthesis. Paradigmatic disciplines thus concentrate on knowledge accumulation. In non-paradigmatic disciplines, by contrast, there is no overarching organising paradigm, but rather a plurality of contesting frameworks, each justified and directed towards accounting for contextual specificity. Contestation in non-paradigmatic disciplines is thus directed towards sharpening the differences between

the competing frameworks (widely but erroneously called ‘paradigms’), to clarify differences between them, not to subsume them into a higher synthesis. The two styles of knowledge commerce are thus fundamentally different. When scientists say, for example, that they feel alienated by Humanities talk, what alienates them is the intellectual project of disputation and critique as an end in itself. They are fundamentally puzzled because, where their allegiances lie, the intellectual project is about cumulative integration at a higher level of synthesis, disputation in the service of higher agreement. To risk trivialisation: where the Humanities do critique, the sciences do equations and flowcharts. Mutual misrecognition and mutual alienation should not be surprising.

Of course the two teams never cease to try to ‘convert’ their opposite number: the Humanities to ‘humanize’ the scientists by teaching them critique; the scientists to ‘stiffen the spine’ of the Humanities with a bracing dose of rigour and empirical proof. The two cultures live on.

Missing from the ‘what about the Humanities?’ discourse, however, is any enlightening discussion about the economy, or about the state. This riposte to Juma thus slides past his challenge and leaves his question unaddressed.

‘What about the state?’ Surprisingly this question concerned only a few participants, but a clear answer, and alternative, to Juma did emerge, one worth taking seriously. What if development should not be left to the private sector as, implicitly, it is for Juma but is rather retained as the preserve of the state, an option not incompatible with Castells’ view? The model offered in this context is that of Cuba, a particularly good one, because there is now a burgeoning empirical literature which shows that in the equitable distribution of services and competences, Cuba far outstrips its Latin American counterparts. What is it doing right? It has a strong developmental state that sends clear and unambiguous signals to the education system as to what is expected; but perhaps more interestingly, it becomes an active agent of social cohesion, a project linked in to the project of development. How would this deal differently with the universities? Well, it would not tolerate the poorly performing institutions, and would close them forthwith. Universities would also have to sing very smartly for their supper. Much that goes for academic freedom currently in Africa would be regarded as an expendable indulgence. These are the sacrifices to be expected, small, if the national interest is weighed as paramount.

‘What about the expatriate intelligentsia?’ This question was not raised except in passing, but it sat as an uninvited guest in the company of the symposium, not least because many of the attendees fell into that category. The symposium heard a sophisticated and articulate defence of the expatriate option; but while this made perfect sense on the individual level, the rising levels of émigré intellectuals out of Africa simply has to constitute a major brake on the prosperity of the university in Africa. This was a nettle perhaps a little too hot to grasp at this symposium.

Another bridge perhaps a little too far: ‘What about the money?’ Here is a nettle whose grasping simply cannot be deferred. Globally, public funding of higher education is declining, nowhere more so than in Africa, where low economic growth rates are putting further pressure on the public purse. Juma’s solution is to get the

private sector to help pay for the assets it depends upon the universities to provide. The idea provoked a marked squeamishness amongst the participants at this symposium, who avoided rather than engaged with the question. Avoidance leads, as we see all too clearly in much of Africa, to the default position of creeping privatisation from below, or in other words, to the unconstrained establishment of private universities, sponsored by religious or business concerns, which in many African countries have come to outnumber the public institutions. There are those who place some faith in the power of foreign aid. Whilst this is indeed currently fulsome in some quarters, it would be short-sighted indeed to imagine that it could ever be more than a palliative, never a solution for the public higher education system.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the symposium has imperfectly grappled with Juma's challenge. It is clear that the Humanities delegates felt his solution to be distasteful; but apart from the 'strong state' option, no other alternative was forthcoming. It can be surmised that we continue to hope that the state will remain our principal benefactor, but this is increasingly in doubt. What we will do when the state withdraws beyond a critical point is hard to say.

#### **REFERENCES**

Castells, M. (2001) 'Universities as dynamic systems of contradictory functions'. In J. Muller, N. Cloete and S. Badat (eds) *Challenges of Globalisation: South African Debates with Manuel Castells*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.

Kuhn, T.S. (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.