BOOK REVIEWS


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This book is the first major attempt on the part of African academics and other intellectuals to evaluate the achievements and failures of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development. NEPAD, the economic programme of the African Union, is the latest in a succession of pan-African institutions which seek to grapple with the development challenges facing Africa. Since NEPAD’s policies and strategies impact on the economies of African countries and on the lives of ordinary Africans, it has attracted the attention of scholars, activists and development practitioners. In 2002, a year after NEPAD was established, there were public protests in South Africa against the initiative which were led by civil society intellectuals. This set the debate around NEPAD in motion. Adésinà et al.’s book contributes to the debate from within a tradition of scholarship that is socially grounded.

Many of the issues raised in the contributions to this book, which originated at a conference in 2002, speak to recent developments captured in the Sachs, Annan and Blair Commissions’ reports on Africa. These are discussed in the book’s introduction. With the exception of the chapters by Maloka and Sangare (who only makes cursory reference to NEPAD), most contributions are critical of the NEPAD policy document because its growth-centred development path disadvantages the poor. It is crucial that its neo-liberal approach to development is subject to critical scrutiny, but that scrutiny must also supply viable alternatives. This is what Adésinà et al.’s book attempts to do. Most of the contributors, however, acknowledge that the margins for promoting alternative development based on people-centred principles have narrowed under the constraints of neo-liberalism sponsored by the Bretton Woods institutions.

The book is made up of three parts. Part 1 offers an assessment of the NEPAD document in terms of the two perspectives that dominate the debate within Africa: Adésinà and Taylor represent the perspective that is critical of the neo-liberal foundations of NEPAD, while Maloka provides an example of a perspective that is more sympathetic towards NEPAD because it is perceived to be a genuinely African initiative. Part 2, the chapters by Moyo, Sangare, Keet, Ya’u & Chenntouf, is concerned with the principal sectoral challenges to Africa’s quest for sustained development. Part 3, the chapters by Randriamaro, Uche & Anyemedu, addresses the challenge of financing Africa’s development.

Two perspectives

In Chapter 1 Adésinà states that ‘It is difficult to quarrel with a document that sets peace, security and good “governance” as conditions for sustainable development or the accelerated reduction and elimination of widespread poverty’ (p.36), but he cannot
agree with NEPAD’s framework and development paradigm (which are based on the neo-liberal post-Washington Consensus of the World Bank, advocating increased liberalisation of economies, growth-centred development and ‘trickle down’ economics), for none of these have produced a real reduction of poverty. Adésinà feels that the NEPAD document does not recognise that twenty years of neo-liberal policies in Africa have failed to remove the structural impediments which disadvantage Africa in the global trade system; or that there are competing models of capitalism. He is convinced that ‘What Africa needs ... is a coherent platform for pooling the resources of the African countries for focused and effective trade negotiations, [which] challenge ... the prevailing norms within WTO’ (p.54).

In Chapter 2 Taylor offers similar criticisms of NEPAD’s development policy. He argues that government elites in Algeria, Egypt, Senegal and South Africa are using NEPAD to promote the economic interests of their own countries at the expense of poorer African states. Furthermore, he asks: What is new about the new developmental agenda? Why is it inadequate? He laments that despite the disillusionment with globalisation, African elites have failed to provide alternative leadership so the world can be run more equitably; the leaders of NEPAD continue to work according to the old hegemonic rules for ‘Their own policies aid and abet the very marginalisation and immiseration they now decry’ (p.81). Taylor argues that African government officials do not act in the interests of the under-classes, and that the poor need to organise to bring about change that serves their interests.

Maloka is sympathetic to NEPAD. In Chapter 3 he tackles the critics of NEPAD by brokering a dialogue between NEPAD and its critics. Maloka acknowledges shortcomings in the NEPAD process, for example the campaign which initially focused on the private sector, the G8 countries and multilateral institutions but which neglected to address major concerns of African civil society. He argues that subsequently NEPAD has begun addressing these criticisms. Maloka (and NEPAD) are convinced that NEPAD’s African development strategy is not at fault and that many of the criticisms are as a result of misinformation or misunderstanding. He also offers an alternative genealogy of and rationale for NEPAD. While the reviewer does not share Maloka’s position vis-à-vis NEPAD policy, this different perspective enriches the NEPAD debate.

**Sectoral Challenges**

In Chapter 5 Moyo examines NEPAD’s agricultural policy and agrarian transformation. He questions NEPAD’s commitment to social justice and equity in general, and within the agricultural sector in particular. For example, NEPAD calls for the reform of national regulatory systems, yet ignores the need to reform the regulation of the transnational agrarian market system and the global ‘multilateral governance systems which affect agriculture’ (p.121). This echoes similar criticisms levelled at NEPAD by Adésinà and Taylor. He observes that the NEPAD document does not offer a vision whereby land and agrarian reform and an industrial development strategy will jointly lead to development. Moyo proposes an integrated development strategy that revolves around five core elements: ‘land reform, integrated trans-sectoral rural production ... rural infrastructure development, institutional reform, and regional integration’ (p.136).
In his analysis of the nature of industrialisation in Africa in Chapter 6, Sangare discusses a number of problems that retard industrialisation in Africa. These include, for example, Africa’s inability to create the conditions that will attract the type of long-term foreign investment necessary for industrialisation; dependency on primary production and outward orientated production which leave Africa’s economies vulnerable to external shocks like price fluctuations in international markets; and bad management of firms. His proposal for the ‘industrialisation of complementarity’ through endogenous inter-sectoral linkages would minimise external shocks while accelerating the horizontal integration of African countries into the global economy. This industrial development framework is similar to the Lagos Action Plan.

Keet’s interrogation of NEPAD’s trade policy and trade regimes in Chapter 7 is rigorous and uncompromising. She also covers issues like the vulnerability of African economies to external price shocks and NEPAD’s reluctance to challenge the WTO. The reviewer refers to two of the aspects of NEPAD’s trade policy in order to demonstrate the quality of her contribution to The NEPAD Debate. With regard to the relationship between infrastructure development and economic growth, she warns that ‘setting up sophisticated structures in advance of and to stimulate such economic process, without the necessary systems and appropriate infrastructure to maintain and service them, and without the economic agents and activities to fully utilise or effectively employ them, could simply create more vast “white elephant projects”’ (p.154). In relation to NEPAD’s model of inter- and intra-regional harmonisation and regulation of manufacturing processes and standards, and of trade, economic and investment policies and practices, she argues that such financial harmonisation with increasing liberalisation favours companies and investors from wealthier African countries like South Africa. Repatriating profits back to their countries perpetuates existing imbalances in Africa. Keet nevertheless sees that such regulations may provide greater financial transparency, social and environmental responsibility and democratic accountability but wonders whether this is the priority for NEPAD right now. She suggests that NEPAD introduce compensatory and redistributational mechanisms to counter the negative effects described above. (Such proposals are not new.) She also supports preferential trade tariffs between members of NEPAD. Keet notes that such preferential terms run counter to WTO rules and regulations.

Ya’u examines information and communication technology (ICT) in Africa in Chapter 7. One of his major criticisms of NEPAD is that it does not say how ICTs are to be deployed to promote development, democracy and good governance. He also criticises NEPAD’s market-driven policy framework which is primarily concerned with profit-making and therefore lacks commitment to making ICTs universally accessible. His conclusion is that the digital divide is increasing. WTO agreements, for example the protection of property rights, make it difficult for developing countries to access computer software and newer technologies. Ya’u is concerned that ICTs contribute to development, and proposes that ‘we ... engineer the hardware core of globalisation to produce an inclusive and human-development-orientated software framework for a truly global world of even opportunities’. However, he overlooks the value of Open Source software and the Shuttleworth Foundation’s work in South Africa to make ICT accessible to the poor.
Chenntouf’s chapter is devoted to the educational and scientific policies of NEPAD against Africa’s declining human resource development and diminishing competitiveness in the global economy. He does not evaluate the relevant objectives and priorities in the NEPAD document, though he is concerned that the objectives will come to nought if African states do not invest in education and the knowledge revolution. His observation that in the twenty or so years immediately following political independence, many African states made considerable headway in the field of education and training is historically significant. From the 1980s, a reduction in public spending on education in almost all sub-Saharan countries was promoted as part of the World Bank/IMF structural adjustment policies. Chenntouf calls for continent-wide coordination and planning, that is also responsive to local conditions, and that draws together the educational, cultural and scientific sectors.

**Financing of Africa’s development**

In chapter 9 Randriamaro uses a gender perspective to examine NEPAD’s ‘development discourse’ and its policies and thinking about how Africa’s development can be financed. For example, she shows that NEPAD, and other initiatives like UNECA’s Compact for African Recovery (CAR), which do not offer ‘any form of protection for domestic industries ... [are] a major threat to local enterprises, specially MSEs, where women predominate’ (p.229). She calls for NEPAD to abandon the Washington Consensus and adopt a human rights framework that can ensure economic and social justice, and make a clear political choice in favour of the most disadvantaged, including poor women. She points to the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes, which was developed 1996, as a more appropriate approach.

In Chapter 10 Uche discusses why the ECOWAS Fund for Cooperation, Compensation and Development, as an example of an African attempt to fund the promotion of economic development and reduce poverty, failed. According to Uche the most damming reason was the lack of commitment by African states to ensure financial support.

The lack of direct foreign investment leaves Africa largely dependent on foreign aid to finance its development. In the last chapter Anyemedu discusses the problems that result from reliance on donor aid and private capital (mainly foreign investment) to finance Africa’s development. Though Anyemedu appreciates the dilemma facing NEPAD and the tension between the idealism of self-reliance and the pragmatism of the current African situation, he notes that foreign aid from multilateral and bilateral donors is more often than not accompanied by economic and political conditions that entrench dependency and undermine self-reliance. Anyemedu challenges the view that industrialisation in Africa needs to be dependent on foreign investment. He proposes that NEPAD spearhead the promotion of domestic savings mobilisation to generate development financing.

Although the reviewer shares the dominant discursive framework that emerges in the book vis-à-vis NEPAD’s development policy, he thinks the interests of diversity and debate would have been furthered had a few more apologists for NEPAD been included in the volume.
The book is an example of socially engaged scholarship, which is probably why many of the contributions go beyond merely critiquing to propose alternatives which are people-centred. Although this is done unevenly it is, in the reviewer’s opinion, one of the strengths of the book and an area that requires further attention. The reviewer looks forward to further publications from CODESRIA that draw on scholarship that is socially grounded to present viable alternatives for Africa’s development.


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Reforms in the higher education sector in Africa have stimulated enormous scholarly interest among researchers of diverse regional and disciplinary backgrounds. While much of the interest has produced useful studies on the effects of privatisation on relevance, equity and access, some studies have simply been celebratory. Particularly worrying have been those findings that dubiously corresponded to the ideological predisposition of the sponsoring institution.

Conceptually, there are three generations of studies that more or less lie in-between the desire for dispassionate interpretation and those others that seek ideologically to conform. The first are World Bank (and similarly oriented institutions) studies. The Bank is of special interest in this regard since it has been a key actor on the higher education scene in Africa owing to its fiscal influence. The findings in studies it sponsors tend more or less to correspond to the policy justification it pronounced for education reforms in Africa in the early 1980s and the reversals it has made since then. The Bank framed and treated education like any other investment that was subject to the market logic. This resulted in the emphasis on basic at the expense of higher education.

Second are studies of a more critical nature sponsored mostly by a number of major foundations. These studies critique the direction of education reforms, identify the main shortcomings in the process and seek to provide resources aimed at revitalising the sector. Though these studies represent the first initiatives at understanding the effects of the reform process, they only mildly question the market logic underpinning these reforms and as such end up implicitly celebrating the idea that they ought to question.

The third are a set of recent studies designed and driven by the research interests of independent individuals or institutions. Though these studies are also informed by the ideological predispositions of the authors and institutions that they are associated with, they are based on extensive and thorough empirical work and deal with a comparatively longer historical time frame. These strengths, combined with the fact that they are also informed by a sound methodological approach, reveal them as more rigorous and ‘radical’ than the first two sets of literature.
Mahmood Mamdani’s study titled *Scholars at the Marketplace* belongs to the third category of literature. The study has several advantages; the first is associated with the author and the other revolves around the choice of topic. As a Ugandan and former professor at Makerere, Mamdani has unmatched understanding of the dynamics of reforms at the university. This combines very well with the fact that Mamdani has wide experience of the African education scene having researched and taught at various universities in Africa and served as president of the premier social science organisation in Africa, CODESRIA.

The author’s choice of Makerere is perfect. Makerere has been at the centre of the reform process since 1992. It is a pioneer of privately sponsored student programmes in the East African region and has been lauded severally by the Bank as a leading institution where reform is concerned. It is the oldest university in the region and among the first to seriously embrace the idea of reforms floated by the Bank. With such a head start, Makerere has obviously attracted enormous attention. But the attention has, until recently, largely been laudatory. Most analyses have paid lip service attention to the critical issues of what impact such reforms have had on the historic role of the university in both human manpower development and national service and on issues of quality, relevance and access.

Mamdani addresses these two questions. He shows that the reform process in Makerere was driven by the lecturers under a policy framework defined by the Bank. The context is important: at the behest of the Bank, the Ugandan government simply abdicated from its responsibility of financing university education. It allocated funds, but these were normally lower than what the university requested; when it dispensed the allocation, this was significantly lower than what was promised. As such, the university began to explore alternative avenues of funding its operations. It shifted its focus to raising money from fee-paying students who did not qualify for public sponsorship. In other words, privatisation grew as ‘a survival strategy than a first preference’ (p. 3). The more fee-paying students the university attracted, the less funding it received from the state. Eventually the government excused itself from funding higher education while the university began to see privatisation as a source of additional funds. At the time, ‘the overriding view was both short term and narrowly financial, that privatization would lead to a financial gain without a cost’ to the university (p 29).

Reform started as a move towards simple privatisation, but was soon overridden by commercialisation and vocationalisation. Though the university administration preferred privatisation, the combined force of academic staff and students at Makerere put their weight around a form of privatisation that entailed a profit-maximisation and income-maximisation strategy (pp. 30-31). This involved getting commercial units to become profit-making while professional schools would become fee-earning. To induce them into achieving these objectives, financial and administrative decentralisation was allowed in turn so that as fee-earning units attracted more students, they also retained most of the income generated and proceeded to manage the programmes independent of the central administration.

Mamdani shows that this process took place in a piece meal fashion through a process of trial and error. The result was that ‘the structure was in place for gradual dismantling of the public university and its step-by-step replacement by a privatised
In Mamdani’s apt words, the university ‘system of decision-making’ was so ‘comprehensively decentralised that no one, neither the centre nor any of the constitutive units, any longer had a comprehensive idea of the “reforms” in the university’. The result, he adds, was that each ‘faculty saw the university from only its own vantage point. Eventually, no one really knew what the elephant looked like. Meanwhile, the elephant was being transformed from a public to a private beast’ (p. 32).

The initial idea of privatisation rested on the assumption of admitting private students to external programmes and slowly expanding into evening and later into day programmes. It was also assumed that such students would be admitted into professional faculties thereby leaving the heart of the university academic programmes in the Arts, Social Sciences and Science untouched. Such a scenario, it was assumed, would leave the core university function of intellectual quality and national service intact. But by 1996, this assumption had been overturned as Faculty of Arts became the hub of the market-driven courses admitting more private students than most professional and technical faculties for both evening and day programmes. From then onwards, not only were the academic programmes at the heart of the academy privatised and commercialised, the Faculty of Arts led the way to vocationalisation as opposed to professionalisation. Vocationalisation dealt a major blow to the quality of education while decentralisation ensured the remedial steps would be almost impossible to effect.

The results of this process are discussed in chapter two to four of the study. The chapters review how reforms at Makerere led to the turf wars, commercialisation and decentralisation. The turf war pitted faculty against faculty, faculty against central administration, at times, leading some units to secede. Some departments conflicted with others especially when lecturers were poached to teach in other programmes. So insidious was the market ethic that had penetrated Makerere that many of the ‘staff were no longer willing to do anything that was not directly paid for’ (p.70). Furthermore, the increasing numbers of students had a serious negative impact on quality of education. For one, the university did not hire more teaching staff in response to expanding student numbers, thereby leaving teaching to an overworked staff that, in turn, did a poor job or left teaching to part-time lecturers whose qualifications were dubious at best (pp.111-119). Also, there was a problem of lack of lecture space as the university infrastructure was hardly expanded to meet increasing numbers. A member of one investigating committee referred to the teaching facilities in Makerere as slums (p. 134; see also pp. 136-142). The library facilities were in turn misused as the vocational students used it ‘simply as reading space’ and not as ‘a source of reading and research material’ (p. 145).

Vocational programmes were mostly run through evening classes. But the central administration did not adjust to this reality and university offices closed precisely at the time when evening classes began (p. 160). Then, there was the transgression of disciplinary boundaries as departments and faculties ‘innovated’ by creating interdisciplinary programmes that were hardly anchored in any disciplinary competence and that simply fuelled the turf war and the poaching of staff between departments all on the pretext of generating income. ‘The cumulative outcome of these developments’, Mamdani concludes, was ‘the erosion of the public university called

university’. In Mamdani’s apt words, the university ‘system of decision-making’ was so ‘comprehensively decentralised that no one, neither the centre nor any of the constitutive units, any longer had a comprehensive idea of the “reforms” in the university’. The result, he adds, was that each ‘faculty saw the university from only its own vantage point. Eventually, no one really knew what the elephant looked like. Meanwhile, the elephant was being transformed from a public to a private beast’ (p. 32).

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Makerere and the dramatic growth, at first alongside it but increasingly in its place, of a private university with the same name but with inter-disciplinary vocational programmes, fee-paying students, a predominantly part-time teaching staff and a permanent administrative staff hired as coordinators’ (p. 119).

*Scholars in the Marketplace* makes for very interesting reading. First, it explodes the myth that private-sponsored students were a money making venture. On the contrary, Mamdani shows that ‘the university’s income still came mainly from government’ (p. 233). Second, it shows that academic standards have not only fallen well below quality, this has come at a cost to the research base that was at the core of the university mission. Instead, there is vocationalisation of the academic curriculum which, Mamdani recommends, ought to be separated ‘from the academic university, and the non-research-based from research-based education’ (p. 237). Finally, he argues that Makerere needs to re-think the nature of decentralisation in favour of separating the financial from administrative and academic (p. 238). This would deal with the unjustified resistance that staff mounted against well-intentioned reforms initiated by the central administration.

This is a fine study. Though one misses the Mamdani of *Citizen and Subject* and *When Victims Become Killers*, in *Scholars in the Marketplace*, the narrative approach more than compensates for the analytical hesitancy. Clearly, it was necessary that the data that Mamdani marshalled had to be presented in this format. Still, the concluding chapter could have been more rigorous in deploying the author’s analytical skills to provide a more generalised, even comparative, treatment of higher education reforms in Africa. After all, Mamdani has been at the leadership apex of the African social science community and there are now enough studies for such comparisons and generalisations to be made. Mamdani’s study of Makerere is microcosmic in many ways and perhaps the author has thrown a long overdue challenge to all of us to join in the discussion. Certainly, this is a useful intervention that ought to be replicated for Africa, if not for the East African region. The results can only be better.

**Notes**


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