



University Expansion and the Challenges to Social Development in Kenya: Dilemmas and Pitfalls

Ibrahim Ogachi Oanda* & James Jowi**

Abstract

The phenomenal expansion of public and private universities in Kenya in recent years has opened access to thousands of knowledge-thirsty students to achieve their ambitions. Public universities in particular have been forced to diversify their programmes, establish flexible learning schedules and set up campuses away from their traditional locations. But how do current trends in higher education expansion in Kenya place the institutions in good stead to stem social exclusion and contribute to social development? To what extent is the expansion of public universities in Kenya accompanied by equity considerations and new ways of articulating the issues of class, gender and ethnicity? From being ivory towers and national development projects that were solely seen in terms of workforce development, universities throughout Africa have dispersed to the rural areas both as a strategy to expand access and position themselves as business entities. However, this expansion has not been driven by the public sector. Rather, it has been driven by the private sector, with branch campuses of public universities in rural areas sometimes serving as private income generation units, outside strict public sector oversight. This article traces these developments in Kenya, pointing out the new challenges in terms of equity, quality and the existence of universities as national social institutions that have to be at the centre of social development. The article is based on a critical desk review of published and grey literature on current trends and implications of public university expansion in Kenya.

Résumé

Ces dernières années, l'expansion phénoménale des universités publiques et privées au Kenya a ouvert l'accès à des milliers d'étudiants assoiffés de

* Kenyatta University, Kenya, oandaibrahim@yahoo.com

** Moi University, Kenya, otienojowi@yahoo.com

connaissances. Les universités publiques ont en particulier été contraintes de diversifier leurs programmes, d'établir des horaires d'apprentissage flexibles et de mettre en place des campus éloignés des sites habituels. Mais comment les tendances actuelles de l'enseignement supérieur permettent-elles de mettre en oeuvre des institutions capables d'endiguer l'exclusion sociale et de contribuer au développement social? Dans quelle mesure l'expansion des universités publiques, peut-elle s'accompagner de conditions d'équité et de nouvelles manières de traiter d problèmes de classes, de genre et d'ethnicité? De tours d'ivoire à de projets nationaux de développement dont elles ont été singulièrement, les universités se sont dispersées à travers l'Afrique et dans les zones rurales à la fois comme stratégie d'accès plus élargi, et comme entités commerciales. Cette expansion n'a cependant pas été le fait du secteur public; elle a été le résultat du secteur privé qui, avec des universités publiques délocalisées dans les zones rurales, agit parfois comme générateur de revenus, en dehors de tout contrôle du secteur public. Cet article retrace ces évolutions au Kenya, en soulignant les nouveaux défis en termes d'équité, de qualité et d'universités qui devraient être, en tant qu'institutions sociales, au centre du développement social. L'article est basé sur une analyse critique de la littérature publiée et grise portant sur les tendances actuelles et les conséquences de l'expansion des universités publiques au Kenya

Introduction

In the last two decades, university education in Kenya, as it has been in most of Africa, has expanded, both in the number of institutions and student enrolments. This expansion has been explained in terms of a response to social demand and developmental imperatives. Curiously, the expansion has taken place more as a private sector enterprise not driven by the public sector, at a time of widespread realization of the failure of the application of neoliberal policies to generate economic growth and reduce poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. This is despite the fact that in many parts of the developing world, there are evident trends towards demands for more effective social policies that mitigate the effects of market failures and reduce inequalities.

Three developments, related to the globally-driven liberalization in higher education provision, have fuelled this expansion. First has been the adoption of policies and practices that have promoted the privatization of public universities and the establishment of new private universities. Second has been the pressure by political elites for the establishment and location of universities on a regional basis. This trend has seen the conversion of mid-level regional vocational colleges into university colleges of existing universities and the growth of what has been referred to as the 'town campus' phenomena, where every university is locating or buying building spaces in major

rural and urban areas, to tap into the increasing number of working students who want to enrol and attend classes in the evenings and weekends. Third has been the opening up of extra-mural and open-learning centres throughout the country to offer academic programmes through distance learning and virtual technologies and the increasing establishment of twinning arrangements and credit-transfer systems with a diversity of mid-level colleges. These developments have transformed the university in Kenya from 'the ivory tower' perception tag it used to attract from government bureaucrats into an institution that operates closer to the people in the rural areas in terms of location and access. The relevance of this expansion in terms of how the universities are engaging to contribute to social policy interventions, especially with respect to locally relevant research engagements, remains unexamined. In terms of universities as developmental institutions, one could argue that if university expansion has to be transformational, it has to be accompanied by new ways of engagement with local communities to redress tendencies to social exclusion by contributing to tackling poverty and inequality and to redress inadequate and uneven distribution of higher education opportunities. This article will reflect on these trends, specifically in terms of how the 'ruralisation' of university institutions in Kenya is accompanied by their increased role in the design and implementation of social policies, broadly defined, or accentuating tendencies towards social exclusion and the creation of new 'rural elites'. The physical expansion of universities has in no doubt been beneficial in terms of addressing increasing demand for university education. This article will however not interrogate such positive accomplishments, but rather the challenges related to the realization of a university as a social development institution.

Conceptual Framework: Social Development as the New Territory of Higher Education Expansion

How do current trends in higher education expansion contribute to a better understanding of social protection or articulation of social protection policies and achievement of social development? Social development is generally understood to comprise of a set of objectives including social inclusion, sustainable livelihoods, gender equity, increased voice and participation. Though education has been particularly significant as an instrument of social policy, in the sense not only of policies for welfare but also as policies intended to deal with the structure of society, the specific role of higher education is rarely examined. Higher education is conceived more as an agent of economic development, with regard to its role in producing a trained workforce

for the economy, and less in terms of social development, with regard to its role in social engineering. However, the rapid expansion of higher education in Africa, especially the university sector of higher education in the context of neo-liberalism, has caused a rethinking of how such expansion may contribute to social policy measures that support society's poorest and most vulnerable communities to better manage risks or contribute to interventions that limit tendencies to social exclusion.

The concern that higher education should be an instrument of social development is not new. Within the liberal tradition, societies have often toyed with competing conceptions of the university; either as an institution designed for the preservation and dissemination of scholarship and education, or as a training school focused on providing students with skills relevant to employment and the economy. One would argue then that if university expansion (both in the geographical and demographic sense) has to go beyond the traditional human capital conceptions, expansion has to be accompanied by new ways of engagement with local communities to redress tendencies towards social exclusion by contributing to tackling poverty and inequality, and also to redress inadequate and uneven distribution of higher education opportunities.

Though established as 'development' institutions, there has always been scepticism if the universities in Africa ever responded to this mandate. Attempts to realign the institutions to this role led to the kind of external interference in terms of policy making and structures that was witnessed in the 1980s and 1990s. This is the context within which the international community persuaded governments in Africa to perceive higher education more in terms of its contribution to economic development that benefited a few elites, as compared to social development. This kind of thinking informed policy that favoured investments in basic education as compared to higher education. Basic education, it was argued, benefited the majority and therefore had more social benefits, compared to higher education. Studies that were undertaken to explore the effect of this policy shift in preference for basic education showed that, despite the neglect of higher education in Africa, it impacted negatively on other dimensions of human development, such as provision of quality basic education and healthcare (Olu and Kimenyi 2011).

The debate on the role of university education as an agent of economic development and as agent of social development in Africa however goes back to the very establishment of universities in the continent, first as colonial projects and later as national institutions. Literature on higher education and development in Africa has always portrayed the university as an institu-

tion that has narrowly contributed to the development process since its establishment (Salmi 1992), while other literature within the neo-liberal paradigm (massification, privatization) see this processes as deepening the alienation of the universities from their communities (Oanda 2010). From the 1990s, and especially the publication of the World Bank's 2002 work on 'Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education', a strong case was made for more investment in higher education by both donors and national governments. This position was backed by new studies that showed that higher levels of education can be associated with much higher private and social returns as compared to primary education, and the low levels of social development in Africa would partly be explained by low investments in higher levels of education (Olu and Kimenyi 2011). Other assertions were also made that investing in higher education was critical to achieving the MDG targets (see Mohammedbhai 2008). This policy shift again in favour of higher education required a rethink along three conceptual trends. First, within the neo-liberal paradigm, which has influenced much policy thinking on how higher education has to be provided in the context of the 'knowledge economy' era, there has been greater advocacy towards privatization as critical to attaining the balance between access, quality and equity in the higher education system. The second shift has been the steady expansion of public universities, both in terms of student numbers, institutions and localities. Whereas the developmental university inherited from the colonial period was often urban based and served a limited number of students, an emerging trend, and which is being translated into policy in countries like Kenya is to localize the territory of the university, to de-urbanize the university as a symbol of modernity and establish it as an institution physically inserted in rural life and responding to the social development challenges of rural areas. The third conceptual trend has been in the switch from the perception of the university as a national institution, whose intellectual work cascades from the national to the local, to a university as a local institution that should facilitate local bureaucrats (students and elites) to have access to national resources. Both these trends provide the analytical frame in analysing university expansion explored in this paper.

One line of thought that has permeated discussions of university expansion in Africa is the view that such expansion should transform the institutions from being 'elitist ivory towers' to agents of social development through, for example, broadening access paths to the institutions, the way students are initiated and socialized into university community life and the way the quality of learning and research is processed, ensured and maintained

(Kinyanjui 2007). This assertion of the social dimension of higher education means that higher education institutions must play a critical role in reducing social inequality by encouraging wider participation of students from vulnerable social groups and by eliminating the barriers to accessing and completing studies. Besides, and as Mkandawire argues, such marginalized groups who are coming into higher education at a late stage will need a very high quality and contextually relevant higher education (Mkandawire 2011). To meet this challenge, it has been argued that higher education institutions should strengthen their academic core – in the building of strong science and technology programmes, in increased postgraduate enrolments and improved graduation rates, academic staff with doctorates, in teaching workloads that enable research to be undertaken, in improved academic salaries that militate against the need to take on ‘extra’ jobs and consultancies, and in dedicated funding for research (Gibbon 2010). In a study by the Global University Network for Innovation conducted in 80 countries, soliciting the views of experts on the role of higher education in social development, 77 per cent of respondents from Africa indicated that ‘Contributing to poverty reduction stood out as the human and social development challenge that is the highest priority for higher education’ (GUNI 2008). This means that if one were to analyse current university expansion in Africa, it would be important to take the perspective that university expansion should be appreciated with the extent to which it contributes to social development as the starting point.

It can be argued that for the university to contribute to social policy and social development in Africa, current developments (be it in institutional expansion, growth in enrolments, and evolving governance structures) have to be construed beyond the traditional conception of the university as critical to development tied to economic growth, to a human-oriented development articulated as equity and quality. It is in this sense that Aina (2010) argues for higher education developments that go beyond reforms to transformations, implying new ways of undertaking their teaching and research missions to connect the institutions and systems to the major challenges of their contexts, by creating a sense of national unity, nurturing collective self-reliance, and reducing social inequalities (see also Samoff and Carroll 2004). To achieve these targets, the worth of university expansion should be conceptualized in terms of how the geographical dispersal (from being ivory towers to rural locations) articulates the new issues of equity, to include equality of access and provision by expanding the circle of opportunity, extending the potential to those who might otherwise not have been consid-

ered material for higher education (Pityana 2009). With regard to the implications of university expansion and social policy, equity and access are critical to the perception of fairer societies, social change and national development (Akoojee and Nkomo 2007).

Weaver et al. (2000) has utilized this conceptual frame in arguing for a greater role for higher education in sustainable social development by providing graduates with the attitude, knowledge and skills to lead the process of social development, while also developing and delivering the knowledge to support research on sustainable development. More recently, and reflecting on the role of higher education in the achievement of the MDGs, is Mohamedbhai (2008). He argues for universities' direct involvement in efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger through the promotion of rural agricultural development and design of water and sanitation technologies appropriate to rural areas, to contribute to the achievement of universal primary education through quality teacher education programmes, to develop appropriate policies to remove gender inequity in education at all levels, and to undertake academic programs that promote sustainable development. Universities could also promote the MDGs more directly by inculcating and translating them into every facet of institutional operations, including by, for example, ensuring that each MDG finds expression in university policies (Kotecha 2006).

In the context of rapid growth and expansion of universities and the onslaught of the 'market' on higher education provision, one notes an increasing sense of attention to the social commitments that the universities make to their host communities. The Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI), set up by UNESCO in 1999, for example runs an observatory on universities and social commitment, which among other areas of focus is meant to contribute to the strengthening of higher education's role in society. The observatory aims at increasing the social relevance of universities' main activities: research and teaching to focus on resolving social problems. In so doing, the observatory encourages and documents good practices in the universities that are related to social policy in such areas as social inclusion and cultural diversity, values, ethics and education of the population, university equity policies, the promotion of public services and social rights (basic education, public health, etc.), cooperation in local community development and support for civil society associations, amongst others. Hence, one would want to use some of these benchmarks to gauge the extent of universities' commitment to social policy, away from the traditional conceptualization of a university as a 'developmental' institution. In the

following sections of this article, the geographical and demographic trends in university expansion in Kenya are analyzed, within the context of the implications of this expansion for social policy issues such as equity and quality.

The Geographical and Demographic Expansion of Universities in Kenya

Expansion of university education in Kenya has followed the trend that one could refer to as some form of 'geographical dispersal'. As is the case in most countries, university education, given its colonial origins, has mainly been an urban, elite-driven phenomenon that was meant to cater for the educational needs of a few students, mainly earmarked for providing workforce requirements for central government departments. This location and focus of universities earned the institutions the 'ivory tower' status. However in Kenya, like in other African countries, university expansion is increasingly moving to the rural areas, both in terms of location of institutions and focus for student catchment areas. The tempo of the ruralisation of universities in Kenya started in the early 1980s with some form of political sanction and was couched in the language of the need for 'universities to respond to the imperatives of rural development'. In 1981, a Presidential Working Party that had been set up to work out modalities of establishing Kenya's second public university (The Mackey Report) emphasized this rural approach to the setting up of universities as an approach to development (Republic of Kenya 1981). Moi University that was subsequently established as Kenya's second university had this rural emphasis, even in the constitution of its academic programmes. The School of Environmental Studies, for example, was set up as part of the declared national policy towards preparation for the rational management of natural resources and the environment for sustainable development in Kenya. To that effect, the concept of the school was built into the Report of the Presidential Working Party on the Second University in Kenya. The Working Party took note of the increasing emphasis being laid on environmental management in the country, which as the report noted, had not received sufficient intellectual and scholarly backing (Republic of Kenya 1981).

A mixture of such social policy undertones, backed by overt political and regional interests continues to influence trends regarding university expansion in Kenya. The national rhetoric that accompanied the clamour for public university expansion has however given way to the university as a social

asset and an expression of regional and ethnic political and economic interests. This is a departure from the perception of the university as a 'national and developmental' institution prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s. Institutions of higher learning are viewed not only as increasing higher education opportunities, but also as magnets for local development in the areas in which they are located. The report of the Public Universities Inspection Board in Kenya (PUIB 2006) documents in part the clamour and demand for the establishment of universities in each province and region of the country. Positively, the Report argues that such an approach to higher education development has the potential to foster equitable growth, national cohesion and solidarity. Unmentioned in the Report is the sense of marginality that communities situated away from urban areas have come to feel with regard to higher education provision. The demand for regional universities has been occasioned by such fears, to the extent that the geographic location of the institutions is seen as a means to spur economic, infrastructural and social development and to strengthen the human capital of the regions. It is in response to such regional clamour for universities that the Board recommended the establishment of community colleges and institutes to provide education and training in areas of economic and technological needs of the region where they are situated and serve as vehicles for improving rural productivity, health, education, water and sanitation, energy and sustainable environment (PUIB 2006). Thus far then, it could be argued that the need for higher education to play a greater role in rural development and social policy has informed trends in expansion, at least at a policy level.

Analysis of the trends in the expansion of public universities shows this rural trajectory in terms of spread and size. The first approach towards expansion has been government sanctioned and has entailed the conversion of mid-level colleges into university colleges and campuses of existing public universities. This trend began in 1988 after a presidential directive and has since resulted in the conversion of over fifteen colleges and institutes into university colleges or constituents of mainstream public universities. One result of this conversion has been the loss of colleges that served the mid-tier component in terms of vocational training for industry. Some of the institutes that have been upgraded to colleges aligned to universities include Kenya Science Teachers College, Kitui Teachers College, the Kenya College of Communication Technology (KCCT), Bondo Teachers College, Kitui Teachers College, Kabianga Farmers Training Centre and Kimathi Institute of Science and Technology. University colleges that offer courses by mainstream universities include Pwani University College under Kenyatta University, Kisii University and Chuka University Colleges (both under Egerton

University), and Kimathi University College under Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT). Currently, Kenya has seven public universities: Nairobi, Kenyatta, Moi, Egerton, Jomo Kenyatta, Maseno and Masinde Muliro universities. Together, the universities have an enrolment of 100,649 students. Four of these universities – Egerton, Moi, Maseno and Masinde Muliro – have been established in rural and peri-urban areas. According to government policy projections, 13 university colleges are set to be elevated to full university status by the end of 2012, thus intensifying the rural location of university institutions, since most of these colleges are in rural areas. These include Bondo, Chuka, Kimathi, Kabianga, Laikipia, Narok, Meru, South Eastern, and Kisii university colleges.

Two contradictory outcomes have resulted from this conversion and subverted the very idea of rural development and university's contribution to social policy. The first is that while this trend of expansion has increased access for students who qualify for university admission, a majority of students who do not meet university entry qualifications and who depend on mid-level colleges for vocational training have been denied alternative education opportunities. Data from the Kenya National Examination Council and the Public Universities Joint Admissions Board (JAB) show that an average of 300,000 candidates sit the Form Four qualifying examination to universities, out of which (based on 2010 figures) 81,000 scored the minimum university entry grade of C+. Out of these, public universities would only admit 24,000. The figures of students qualifying to go to universities is likely to increase such that even with the planned elevation of public universities to 16 next year, the percentage of students who cannot be placed at a university and therefore need access to mid-level colleges will be on the increase and have always been more than those admitted to the universities. But then, mid-level colleges have been converted into universities without replacement. What this means is that a major outcome of university expansion, even with its emphasis on ruralisation, has been the constriction of educational opportunities for a large number of students from the rural areas. Universities have of course tried to address this mismatch by introducing certificate and diploma programs at the universities, but since tuition in university vocational programs tends to be higher compared to what it was in the mid-level colleges, this option is not easily taken up by students from poor rural families.

The second approach that university expansion has taken to the rural areas of Kenya is through the establishment of 'town campuses'. This has been made possible since the Commission for Higher Education relaxed rules on acreage that governed establishment of higher education institu-

tions as a strategy to spur the development of private universities. Gradually, public universities have moved from establishing town campuses in major urban centres, such that it is now possible to find a town campus of a public university in small rural towns, housed in single-room apartments. This expansion has been articulated in terms of higher education institutions responding to development requirements in the rural areas. But far from it, the location of the campuses and the courses offered are influenced more by commercial considerations; the competition by the various universities to enrol more students, as a way of generating more revenues, than increasing the contribution of the institutions by engaging in social policy. This expansion has however deepened the trend towards duplication of academic programmes and delivery channels. The same universities are expanding in the same way, offering the same programmes and using the same traditional delivery channels, such that the capacity of the expanding institutions to be transformational is not built into this expansion process. As noted earlier, university engagement can be seen to be transformational if the institutions engage in practices that are directly linked to self-empowerment and the social and economic empowerment of the communities. This is besides institutional commitment to equity and quality. The table below gives a sense of the geographical spread of the universities, through their constituent colleges and town campuses and the prevalent academic programs.

Apart from the geographical dispersal of the institutions, one may want to note the heavy inclination of the universities to offer courses only in humanities and social sciences. Courses leaning towards business and technology, commerce and human resources, mostly offered at a certificate and predominately diploma level, are offered by the same institutions with campuses within the same localities. The reason for this predominance would be the smaller capital investments needed to mount the courses, and this may be attracting more students. The trend however negates the 'rural development' rhetoric: the context of which university expansion has been justified. The offering of more certificate, diploma and bachelors programmes that are intensive, and teaching without any research and graduate education components, may not augur well for a university expansion focused on rural development. The capacity to contribute to the generation of new knowledge that can address societal problems or connect the institutions better to their communities is not factored. The proliferation of universities to rural areas may therefore mark a trend where universities are creating zones of economic exploitation and not academic niches for community development in rural areas.

Table 1: Geographical Spread of the Universities

Moi University	Kabianga -Chepkoilel -Narok -Karatina	-Eldoret Town Campus -Eldoret West Campus -Nairobi Campus -Kericho Campus -Kitale Campus -South Nyanza Campus -Odera Akango Campus (Siaya) -Coast Campus -Northern Kenya Campus	-AMREF International Training Centre - Centre for Tourism Training and Research, Wildlife Clubs of Kenya - Elgon View College	-Diploma in Hotel and Restaurant Management - Diploma in Human Resources Management - Diploma in Business Management - Diploma in Business Information Technology
Maseno University	-Bondo University College	-Kisumu Town Campus -Ndiwa learning Centre -Homa Hill Learning Centre -Homa-bay Learning centre	-Institute of Advanced Technology - Regional Institute of Business Management	-Bachelor of Science in Computing & Internet Systems - Bachelor of Science in Information and Communication Technology Management - Bachelor of Business Management (BBM)
JKUAT*	-Kimathi University College of Technology -Mombasa Polytechnic University College Meru University College of Science and Technology -Multi-media University College of Kenya	-Karen Campus -Taita Taveta Campus -Nairobi Campus -Nairobi CBD** -Mombasa CBD -Nakuru CBD -Kisii CBD -Kitale CBD -Arusha Centre (Tanzania)	-Nairobi Institute of Technology -Holy Rosary College - Kenya School of Professional Studies - Kenya Armed Forces Technical College - Loreto College, Msongari -Pioneer International College - Zetech College	-Diploma in Computer Technology - Bachelor of Science in Computer Technology - Bachelor of Commerce - Bachelor of Mass Communication

* Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

** Central Business District

A related development in university expansion is the demographic composition of students, in terms of age profiles, academic specializations and modes of study. Previously, access to universities was determined by a singular mode, and students of almost similar age profiles characterized the demography of students in the institutions. Since the 1990s when market cultures entered the institutions and government budgets remained static, the admission policy to the institutions and programs has been influenced more by the need to create access dynamics that let in more and more students who can pay market rate tuition fees. This means that the premium given to academic merit in determining access to the institutions and programs, the content of teaching and learning experiences and throughput rates is slowly waning in preference for financial capacity.

Public universities currently operate two modes of admission to the institutions. First are students who are admitted under government subsidy through the centralized public universities Joint Admissions Board (JAB). JAB has developed a system of weighted cluster points to assign courses to the various applicants. The weighted cluster point is a derivative of the overall aggregate points and the individual raw cluster points needed for the study of a subject. The maximum aggregate points that one can score is 84 while the maximum raw cluster points that one can get is 48. Based on this calculation the percentage of students admitted to the public universities under JAB has been declining, averaging between 30-35 per cent of the total number of students who qualify for university admission in the last five years. Technically, these admission arrangements are meant to push a large pool of those who are qualified to seek admission as private tuition paying students. Besides, while public higher education enrolments have been rising annually by around 40 per cent for the last five years, government real subsidies have increased by 4 per cent to 5 per cent over the period, stagnating at about 30 per cent of what the universities need to operate (Nganga 2011). These admission trends are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Admission Trends to Public Universities in Kenya;
2000/01–2008/09

Academic year	Number qualified (C+ and above)	Joint board admissions	Per cent admitted
2000/01	30,666	8,899	29.0
2001/02	40,471	11,147	27.5
2002/03	42,158	11,046	26.2
2003/04	42,721	10,791	25.3
2004/05	58,218	10,200	17.5
2005/06	49,870	10,263	20.6
2006/07	58,239	10,218	17.5
2007/08	68,040	12,261	18.0
2008/09	62,853	16,134	25.7

The overall effect of the admission trends shown in Table 2 above has been to restrict the number of students admitted under JAB and force an increasing number of qualified students to seek admission under the second mode (Module 2) at the level of individual institutions. These Module Two admissions are singularly meant to generate the 70 per cent financial shortfall from the government for the institutions, with little oversight as to the implications for the quality of the programmes and equity. The implication of

these access and admission dynamics is that the number of students on government subsidy is declining in the institutions while that of self-sponsored students has been on the increase, across all academic programmes. Table 3 below illustrates these trends.

Table 3: Student Enrolment at University by Gender, 2003/04-2008/09

University	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06		2006/07		2007/08		2008/09	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Public												
Full-time	29,288	15,697	29,005	15,981	29,555	16,080	33,581	17,981	35,807	18,726	37,257	19,405
Part-time	17,799	9,767	24,389	12,116	24,182	11,860	22,936	16,839	24,693	17,877	25,496	18,489
Total	47,087	25,464	53,394	28,097	53,737	27,940	56,517	34,820	60,504	36,603	62,753	37,896
Private												
Accredited	3,650	4,371	3,796	4,546	4,215	4,624	8,975	6,973	9,688	10,469	10,172	10,992
Unaccredited	763	757	801	907	853	947	2,853	2,091	583	392	618	416
Total	4,413	5,128	4,597	5,453	5,068	5,571	11,828	9,064	10,271	10,861	10,790	11,408
Sub-Total	51,500	30,592	57,991	33,550	58,805	33,511	68,345	43,884	70,775	47,464	73,543	49,304
Grand-Total	82,092	91,541	92,316	92,316	112,229	112,229	112,229	112,229	118,239	118,239	122,848	122,848

Source: Economic Survey – Various Issues

The growth in the number of part-time private students relative to students admitted under JAB presents challenges if university expansion has to be accompanied with greater sensitivity to equity and other social policy considerations. In the first place, most poor students who score grades B- or C+ cannot afford the high tuition fees charged under Module Two admission programmes. It is also evident from the table that a greater number of female students are getting into the institutions as private students, while traditionally these have been minority students in higher education institutions requiring compensatory access policies. The enrolment trends in the table show a pattern where the rate of increase of female part-time students is higher compared to that of male students in public universities, and their constitution as a majority in private accredited universities. One may want to argue that this is evidence of growing economic empowerment of women, but this is negated by their decreased participation in the workforce. The likely explanation is an emerging trend where public higher education expansion as a private enterprise is eroding gains that the poor, women and other minorities have achieved in basic and higher education in terms of access and success rates.

Ideally then, university expansion without commensurate sensitivity to the plight of poor and minority students is negating the idea of meritocracy as an avenue to social mobility. In the long term, such trends in higher education expansion undermine the realization of equity in the development of social capital, especially in poor communities. Second, there are increasing trends where students with lower grades are being admitted to competitive professional academic programs under Module Two admissions, while higher grades are required of their colleagues who are admitted under JAB. Third, there is increasing preference to admit non-traditional mature working students, as they are more financially able to pay for their studies, thus, decreasing places available for first generation students. Lastly, besides offering programs in business related and humanities courses, the universities are increasingly offering certificate and diploma programs compared to the graduate level programs that are critical to innovation and generation of new knowledge. The capacity of the institutions as instruments for social development is thus reduced. All these issues which are related to access and admission policies, the calibre of students and the spectrum of courses on offer, and which have accompanied university expansion in Kenya, continue to diminish the role of university education in the articulation of social policy.

University Expansion and the Crisis of Quality

Kenya's current development targets are driven by Vision 2030 (GoK 2007), the country's development blueprint covering the period 2008 to 2030, and aims to transform Kenya into a newly industrializing, 'middle-income country providing a high quality life to all its citizens by the year 2030'. The blueprint has social equity and human development as one of its three pillars. With regard to university education, the blueprint suggests expansion to realize transition rates to technical institutions and universities from 3 per cent to 8 per cent by 2012, and revise the curricula of university and technical institutes by including more science and technology subjects (GoK 2007:16). More importantly, the blueprint proposes intensified application of STI to raise productivity and efficiency, and recognizes the critical role played by research and development (R&D) in accelerating economic development in the country. To that extent, the Kenya Vision 2030 blueprint includes equity as a recurrent principle in economic, social and political programmes. It is therefore important to interrogate the extent at which on-going trends in university expansion in Kenya embrace the tenets of quality and social development.

To what extent has the rapid expansion of university education been accompanied by quality considerations? Discussions about declining quality of university education are not new; these have been going on for the past two decades. But feelings that the rapid expansion has worsened this trend abound. Kenyan universities and labour markets have not developed a culture of graduate labour market surveys that one can use as benchmarks for quality. Quality is gauged through certain variables: calibre and sufficiency of academic staff, learning and teaching facilities, contact hours, entry behaviour of learners and governance structures. All these variables were lacking in the institutions in sufficient numbers, even before the present level of expansion was underway. With public universities forced to diversify their programmes, establish flexible learning schedules and set up campuses away from their traditional locations, the situation has only got worse. Lack of qualified teaching staff is perhaps the best indicator of this quality crisis, thus limiting the capacity of the universities to contribute to economic and social development, as could be expected with such expansion. A few qualified lecturers are shared between the expanding public universities and the increasing number of private universities. It is common to have Masters' degree holders teaching postgraduate classes; courses taught without reading and reference materials; or examinations moderated downwards to accommodate weaker students or shortened semesters. Universities with strained budgets have focused on physical expansion with little attention paid to staff development programmes, such that an increasing number of teaching staff are Masters' degree holders. For example, at Kenyatta University, academic staff with PhD qualifications accounted for 34 per cent as compared to 66 per cent with Masters' level qualifications by 2008 (Tettey 2010). Consequently, the increasing number of students accessing universities would be going through low quality academic processes, with the effect that increased access to universities may not necessarily result in a realization of equality as fairness, equality of opportunity or fair distribution of wealth in the long term. In this regard, it is important to note universities do not often offer the same level of staff as those in the main campuses, with regard to qualifications, to teach at the proliferating town campuses.

The other aspect to benchmark for quality is in regard to the academic programmes offered in the various campuses that have been opened throughout the country, and the mid-level colleges that have been converted into university colleges. According to the Vision 2030 strategy document (GoK 2007), for Kenya to become an industrialized nation by 2030, it requires a vibrant Technical Vocational Education and Training (TIVET) system. How-

ever, TIVET training in Kenya has been overshadowed by the conversion of various mid-level vocational colleges to universities. The takeovers deny the government the opportunity to increase the transition rates from schools to technical institutes. Achievement of the social policy components of Vision 2030 relies on science, technology and innovation (STI) in the promotion of people's socio-economic development, democracy and governance. The increasing public university expansion through the take-over of mid-level colleges, including polytechnics and teacher training colleges, by universities is bound to impact negatively on the production of mid-level personnel required for Kenya to achieve the Vision 2030 goals. The country needs skilled human capital to drive the industrialization process, yet universities are indulging in upgrading colleges previously producing the much needed technicians and artisans into constituent university colleges to produce graduates in academic areas not related to this purpose. The constituent colleges are gradually phasing out diploma training, evolving into full-fledged universities, thus affecting the training of second-tier professionals. It does not seem that the kind of university expansion taking place is accompanied by a focus on producing professionals in critical areas that the country requires for development. The resources are scarce in most of the campuses to manage the expansion that producing skilled professionals requires. This expansion strategy is progressively shrinking opportunities for the increasing number of students who fail to secure university admissions, thus compounding the problems of access and equity.

One consequence of these trends in university expansion has been an increasing mismatch between the academic programmes that the institutions are offering and the knowledge needs of the economy according to the Vision 2030 blueprint. The mismatch is deepened by the drive for the institutions to peg the introduction of academic programmes not on the country's development needs, but on institutional strategies to generate additional funds. Subsequently, there has been increased duplication in the academic programmes instead of diversification. Academic programmes in architecture and surveying, agriculture, water, environment and energy do not attract students in the institutions, yet these programmes are critical to the country's development (Riechi 2008).

A disturbing outcome of the foregoing is that, even among the students who attend the institutions, perceptions that the institutions and the programmes they go through are of poor quality are increasingly commonplace. While university expansion is meant to address the problem of access and equity, current studies show that, given the opportunity, most students

and parents in Kenya would rather their children studied at foreign universities. A survey carried out in the month of September 2010, by Synovate, a market survey firm, reveals that 57 per cent of 1,044 respondents sampled prefer foreign universities to local ones due to a perception of higher quality standards, prestige, and exposure to life overseas. These results indicate that Kenyan universities, especially public ones, still have some way to go in winning public confidence. The issues are of congestion, shortage of teaching staff, inadequate facilities, and the resulting perception of poor quality education (<http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Kenyans+prefer+foreign+varsities>).

The crisis of quality has been fuelled by the emerging business-like culture within the institutions, affecting both students and lecturers. On the part of the institutions, the new campuses are supposed to serve as revenue generating units, not academic centres in the real sense. Thus, few resources are provided for quality improvement processes. The increasing offering of certificates, diplomas and what are referred to as 'executive degree' programmes is part of this institutional business strategy. The strategy is focused on increasing the number of students who pay market rate tuition compared to students on government subsidy, and increasing the number of academic programmes that require less financial outlay to mount, irrespective of their social relevance. While the strategy has created an impression of expanding access, the quality of academic programmes is compromised. Whereas previously the academic programmes on offer for Module Two (private students) were limited and excluded professional programmes, increasing commercialization and the urge to generate more revenues has influenced institutions to include all the academic programmes, and every other university wants to offer them, even without basic requisite infrastructure. Law, medicine and engineering programmes have parallel versions for the private students, although some universities have made great efforts to integrate both groups of students. At the Masters level, the Masters of Business Administration (MBA), is the most popular Module Two degree programme. One can be admitted straight from the undergraduate school provided one has the ability to pay the fees. At the undergraduate level, the most popular Module Two degree programmes are the Bachelor of Commerce (BCOM) and Information technology (IT). As the universities seek to raise more income from the Module Two degree programmes, the quality of the programmes goes down and the social economic inequalities are increased.

University expansion has also affected academic staff's level of commitment to professionalism. In the first place, university expansion has taken place in the context of acute staff shortage, meaning that there are not enough lecturers to service the growing number of students, institutions and academic programmes. Secondly, staff development budgets in the institutions have been severely reduced, and in some institutions, no staff development programmes exist at all. Instead, institutions have privatized Masters and PhD programmes undertaken by prospective or serving members of academic staff in the institutions, seeing this as another revenue stream. This situation has affected both the quality of Masters and PhD level training in the institutions, with students lacking adequate fieldwork exposure due to cost-related limitations. Serving lecturers undertaking their Masters' or PhD are taking longer than expected to complete their programmes, mostly due to the heavy teaching loads, spread over several campuses of the same institution, and part-timing in other institutions. And with the increasing number of working students, especially in MBA executive programmes, claims of lecturers who sell good grades to students or undertake to write projects for students for pay have become commonplace.

University Expansion and Ethnic Territorialisation

Has the expansion of universities in Kenya been an attempt to expand intellectual space to rural towns? One of the trends that has marked the expansion of universities has been the desire for the regional location of universities. With the establishment of Kenya's second university (Moi University) in 1984, the subsequent establishment and location of universities has often been a national political response to grassroots political pressures. The university has increasingly been seen, not as a national intellectual space that is supposed to contribute to national and social development, but as a regional ethnic space. This practice of course started during the one-party state when the country's president used to serve as chancellor of public universities. However, it has been perfected over time with the location of new public university colleges and campuses seen as 'a development' reward for political support, through the elevation of the local elite to university management positions. Starting with the country's first president Jomo Kenyatta, Jomo Kenyatta University College of Agriculture and Technology (currently Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology) and Kenyatta University College (current Kenyatta University) were located where they are out of political considerations. Egerton and Moi Universities were located in the Rift valley together with a number of university colleges, as President Moi

perfected the art of political patronage to reward ethnic groups who were supportive of his rule.

The current clamour for location of universities and university colleges on political considerations has diminished the university as an intellectual space to an ethnic territory. The location of universities has been accompanied by staffing of senior management positions by members of the local ethnic group, and increasingly because of financial considerations, a large number of students are attending university colleges and campuses near their localities, such that even the ethnic demography of the expanding institutions is diminishing. The problem with the appointment of local elites as the consideration to manage the institutions, without regard to academic standing, is that such managers do not appreciate academic merit in making other appointments below them. Consequently, the academic culture that should accompany expanding universities, if they have to contribute to development through social engineering, is absent in the institutions.

The ethnic territorialisation of Kenyan public universities has already attracted the attention of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), a body created by the government after the 2008 post-election violence. In its audit report of public universities, the NCIC notes that appointment of vice-chancellors and college principals according to tribal considerations was spreading to other ranks of employment in Kenya's seven public universities, made worse by a rise in the incidence of nepotism. With the recent expansion where several mid-level colleges have been converted to university colleges and campuses, the problem of ethnicity in the universities has become more apparent as the new institutions are headed by people from the communities where these institutions are located. The NCIC recommends the removal of top administrators in public universities tribalism. Despite these warnings, vice-chancellors and principals of new university colleges and campuses continue to be appointed along tribal lines or on the basis of dominant ethnic affinities in the regions where universities were located, rather than on merit, a practice that flows downwards to other ranks of employment in the institution.

The expansion of the university as an ethnic territory has pervaded even the emerging private university sector. Here, a combination of religious and ethnic affiliation has occasioned sporadic anarchy in the governance of these institutions, as this determines who is appointed to the management of the institutions, often overlooking the mandates of the institutions as academic institutions. Universities should offer examples of leadership based on merit and not ethnicity. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case in Kenya.

Appointments appear to bear marks of political meddling and attempts to placate ethnic communities living in the areas where institutions are based. Recent investigations by a parliamentary committee revealed a trend of tribal differences that threatened to tear universities apart. It warned of a politicised student fraternity and deep entrenchment of what it termed ‘negative ethnicity’, both threatening to shake the stability of Kenya’s universities.

Regrettably, ethnic-driven expansion and ownership of universities in Kenya is increasingly defining appointments and promotion to higher academic ranks, especially at the level of the professoriate. Newly created university colleges and campuses, especially those located far in the countryside are urging teaching staff from the locality of the institution to move there to help develop ‘their university’ and are using accelerated promotion without any academic credentials as a bait. Alternatively, academic staff who have stagnated at one grade for a long time, mostly due to lack of academic merit, are moving to the new institutions established within their ethnic enclaves and are being given higher academic grades. In both cases, it helps that the new management of the institutions is ethnically based, and hiring of home-based ethnic professors is seen as building a network of trusted loyalists. Hiring of professors who do not have the academic capital cannot however develop the new universities into teaching and research centres of any repute, and this is likely to undermine rather than contribute to the social, cultural or economic development of the regions where they are located. While professorship is supposed to be a universal standard of academic excellence, gauged through such objective criteria as research and publications, the situation in Kenya is that in the new universities, and increasingly the older ones, academics appointed to these positions are not qualified to be appointed to the same positions in other universities that stress academic merit and output.

The problem with university expansion as an ethnic territory in Kenya is that the institutions never get to evolve and attract the requisite academic capital that can place the institutions in good stead as vehicles for development. In the words of Mazrui, while ethnicity has always been a factor in the Kenyan university system, what is happening now at university campuses is greater ethnic consciousness of each other rather than greater sensitivity to intellectual nuances, as seen in increasing instances of academic ethnic cleansing resulting in members of the university community desiring to transfer to ethnically friendly campuses. Instead of universities being are-

nas of universal values and intellectual fraternity, they seem to be deteriorating into beehives of ethnicity (Mazrui, *Daily Nation* February 28, 2008).

Conclusion

In an article reflecting on developments in South African higher education, Sheehan (2009) talks of contradictory transformations. One would use such a phrase to summarize the nature of higher education expansion taking place in Kenya, as has been sketched in this article. The social demand for university level education in Kenya is overwhelming and so is the need for expansion that takes into account issues of equity as a social policy imperative. On the contrary, the current expansion has more to do with quantitatives. It is evident that expansion is being driven less by university institutions as instruments of social policy and more as expressions of narrow political and ethnic interests. In this process, ruralisation of university institutions has sacrificed equity and merit, while the application of business models as a driving force for such expansion continues to undermine any social commitment that the institutions should have to communities.

References

- Aina, T.A., 2010, 'Beyond Reforms: The Politics of Higher Education Transformation in Africa', *African Studies Review*, 53, Number 1, pp. 21–40.
- Akoojee, S. and Nkomo, M., 2007, 'Access and Quality in South African Higher Education: The Twin Challenges of Transformation', *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 21, pp. 65–68.
- Gibbon T., 2010, AFRICA: Development Aid Must Target Knowledge, <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20100716195041644>
- Government of Kenya, 2007, 'Kenya, Vision 2030', Nairobi: National Economic and Social Council.
- GUNI, 2008, *Higher Education in the World 3 – Higher Education: New Challenges and Emerging Roles for Human and Social Development*, Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kinyanjui, K., 2007, 'The Transformation of Higher Education in Kenya: Challenges and Opportunities', paper presented at the 'Mijadala on Social Policy, Governance and Development in Kenya'. Nairobi. Development Policy Management Forum.
- Kotecha, P., 2006, 'Interrogating the Role of Higher Education in the Delivery of the MDGs', *Africa Renewal* 20, No 2, July 2006, p. 16.
- Mazrui, A., 2008, 'Are the Universities Being Tribalized?' *Daily Nation*, 10 February 2008. http://www.nationmedia.com/dailynation/nmgcontententry.asp?category_id=25&newsid=57960.

- Mkandawire, T., 2011, 'Running While other Walk', *Africa Development*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 2, 2011:1–36, Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Mohamedbhai, G., 2008, 'The Contribution of Higher Education to the Millennium Development Goals', paper presented at the 4th International Barcelona Conference on Higher Education; New Challenges and Emerging Roles for Human and Social Development', Barcelona, 31 March–2 April.
- Nganga, G., 2011, 'Kenya: Declining Quality Drives Students Overseas'
<http://www.universityworldnews.com>
- Oanda, I.O., 2010, 'African Higher Education in the Context of Internationalization: Altruistic Partnerships or Global Academic Pillage; A Review Essay of Damtew Teferra and Jane Knight (eds.)'s *Higher Education in Africa: The International Dimension*'. In *African Review of Books*, Vol. 6, No 1, pp. 6-7, ISSN: 0851-7592.
- Olu A. and Kimenyi, M.S., 2011, Higher Education and Economic Development in Africa: Introduction and Overview, *Jeune Afrique Economique 20 (suppl 3):iii3-iii13* doi:10.1093/jae/ejr027
- Pityana, N. B., 2009, 'Plenary Address at the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education', Paris, 5–8 July.
- Public Universities Inspection Board Report, Kenya, 2006, 'Transformation of Higher Education in Kenya: Securing Kenya's Development in the Knowledge Economy', Nairobi.
- Republic of Kenya, 1981, 'Report of the Presidential Working Party for the Establishment of the Second University', (Mackay Report), Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Riechi, A.O.R., 2008, 'Demand for Academic Programmes Offered in Kenya's Public Universities and their Relevance to the Labour Market'.
- Salmi, J., 1992, 'The Higher Education Crisis in Developing Countries: Issues, Problems, Constraints and Reforms', *International Review of Education*, 38(1), pp. 19–33.
- Samoff, J. and Carrol, B., 2004, 'The Promise of Partnership and Continuities of Dependence: External Support to Higher Education in Africa', *African Studies Review*, 47(1), pp. 67-199.
- Sheehan, H., 2009, 'Contradictory Transformations: Observations on the Intellectual Dynamics of South African Universities', *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 7(1).
- Tettey, W.J., 2010, 'Challenges of Developing and Retaining the Next Generation of Academics': Deficits in Academic Staff Capacity in African Universities', *Partnership for Higher Education in Africa*.
- Weaver, P. et al., 2000, *Sustainable Technology Development*, Sheffield: Greenleaf Publishing.

