Higher Education as an African Public Sphere and the University as a Site of Resistance and Claim of Ownership for the National Project

N’Dri T. Assié-Lumumba
Cornell University
Introduction

Throughout the African continent, albeit a product of imperial domination, every state at independence conceived a national project, which aimed at building a nation-state with a clearly articulated development agenda. Education as a social institution was considered requisite toward the actualization of the national project. The sub-sector of higher education, and particularly the university, appeared as an indispensable agency. Given the general colonial policy of exclusion of Africans from university education, at independence the right of African states to build their national/public universities epitomized self-determination. The independence movements in the 1950s-1960s coincided also with the regained popularity of the human capital theory that stipulates that education, especially the highest levels, constitute an investment for individual socio-economic attainment and social mobility as well as national and structural development. From its inception, the Western style of university that was conceived out of the colonial experience represented a special site for contention and affirmation of the Africans to realize their national projects. In the context of globalization, international organizations and programs such as the World Bank through its interventionist Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPS) and more recently General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) have emerged as global proxies of the old colonial powers with the same goal and even emboldened power to influence policies that define or shape higher education in African countries. Key constituencies of African universities, namely students and teaching staff, have resisted such infringement on Africans’ rights to university education and autonomy in determining domestic policies of African states.

This paper aims to analyze the evolution of the African university as a site for the continued struggle for self-determination. It is argued that, although in a handful of African countries a few institutions of higher learning preceded European colonial rule by several centuries the African university in the 21st Century reflects essentially colonial legacy and ongoing channels of skewed relations. Thus, for instance, the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and distance learning programs, and the emerging private universities in the context of liberalization mantra, are also analyzed in the framework of the liberalization policies that have been promoted by the global colonial proxies. In this paper, the public mission of the university, be it public or private, is examined. The approach is basically historical, assessing the actors and their transformations and mutations within the same reality of the structural inequality of power in the global system and various African responses through continued resistance and affirmation. It addresses the fundamental question of the
search for the public university or the university with a public mission for the production of relevant knowledge in the various disciplines, critical thinking and new paradigms, and methodologies to promote social progress. This quest takes place amidst the challenges of the dominant liberal globalization and the objective conditions of the African States, societies, and people.

The paper is articulated under three main headings. The first section locates the idea of development university at the inception of the African public institutions of higher learning at the historical juncture of the transition from formal colonial rule to post-independence. The second section examines the patterns of growth in African higher education, especially the universities, in the context of the economic crisis and the role of international financial institutions in African education domestic policies in the 1970s and 1980s. In this section, the question of the deliberate assault on the African state through the SAPs and the resistance waged by some of the stakeholders of African education are discussed. The third section examines the new stage in the international influence on higher education in Africa in the context of accelerated neo-liberalism and globalization, and their agenda of promoting further state’s disengagement and the implications for African higher education. This section also articulates a call for renewed engagement of the State in the pursuit of the actualization of the public mission of African higher education as a sine qua non for social progress. The conclusion summarizes the arguments articulated and points to relevant research trails.

1. Development University

In spite of their common African attributes and both colonial and post-colonial history, African countries offer a multiplicity and complexity of national contexts in which educational institutions are created and function in carrying out policies that derive from the national agendas. Thus, in this paper there are no sweeping generalizations regarding the state policies and the functioning of the public university throughout the African continent. Rather, the guiding thread is the analysis of paradigms of development in Africa with higher education conceptualized as a core institutional instrument toward the actualization of the development agendas of African states.

This paper critically examines the debate, both from academics and political leadership, on the idea of the public university in the broad and national contexts of the economy and political projects, reforms, and the quest for substantive transformation. One of the main objectives of this paper is to provide an analysis that can lead to a better understanding of the meanings and missions of the public university. This analysis can also help localize
appropriately the discourse on the idea of the public development university and the attempts to actualize it within the African nationalistic or popular struggles for political independence. Aspects of the expectation to control their economic production in the world system and the autonomy of their social institutions through reforms, and the search for relevant paradigms toward social progress, are discussed. Regardless of its relation to the colonial system and legacy, the public university in Africa was conceived as ontologically imbedded in the developmental state. There was a genuine belief that it would play a critical role in promoting socio-economic development. Thus, it is important to analyze the evolution of the idea of the public university and the roles of external agencies in setting African national priorities, the relative importance of the sub-sectors (i.e. basic vs. higher education, academic/university vs. technical/vocational higher education) as viewed by African States in resource allocation.

In the beginning of the colonial conquest, Africans rejected unequivocally European education, whether it was offered through the European Christian religious congregations (British and Belgian models) or the State (French model). However, by the time the independence process started, African families in many corners of the continent wanted to enroll their offspring. The post-colonial state declared education “the priority of all priorities” as it was considered an investment for the state’s development projects. Thus, the state was willing to fund public education at all levels. Furthermore, higher education, and more specifically the university, was deemed of particular importance both for the individuals to meet the optimal level of qualifications required for the labor market and for the state to produce competent experts to help implement the agendas of the grand projects of national development. The willingness to allocate large shares of small national budgets to education with a considerable proportion for higher education was an eloquent statement of the value of higher education in general and especially the university, regardless of the validity of the arguments about over-representation of the elites’ offspring in the education system.

Universities at the time of the respective independence of African countries were public. In the immediate post-colonial period, there were only very few exceptions. In fact, for the various stakeholders, including the families, the students/youth, civil society, and the government, the university meant public university. For the young people, working hard and aspiring to pursue their education to the university was at the same time a personal investment in the future for themselves and their respective families in terms of private returns and nearly a duty toward the states and countries in the struggle for social progress. It was considered a duty and a contribution to build resolutely post-colonial societies engaged on the path of social progress. Access to a public university was considered not a privilege but a right.
toward the highest and most desirable educational achievement and a pre-requisite for socio-economic attainment. In the context of building the new public administration and embryonic industrial sector, the State was the main employer and could unequivocally deliver on the promise of employment for the educationally qualified citizenry. The effort to Africanize the labor force was an eloquent incentive for the very fortunate few among youth to pursue their education to university level. Logically education offered in the public university was fully funded by public money and managed by public administration. It was considered at the service of the greater society.

The Association of African Universities (AAU) addressed many relevant issues related to the university and social development in its seminar and subsequent book entitled *Creating the African University: Emerging Issues of the 1970s* (Yesufu 1973). In this meeting the participants, who were all themselves the products of higher education, albeit received in institutions of the former colonial powers, debated five topics, namely setting the priorities, defining the programs and curricula, Africanizing the university faculty and staff, designing research, life-long learning and other innovative functions. They conceptualized and conceived the design of the university as the state’s institutional apparatus for knowledge acquisition and production not for knowledge sake, but to rather produce the scientific and technical knowledge for the conceptualization, design and implementation of policies toward improved living conditions of the African people and achieve sustainable development of African societies. The conception of the African public university and development of African societies were two sides of the same coin. As Yesufu (1973:41-42) stated:

A truly African university … must be one which, while acknowledging the need to transform Africa into the twentieth century, must yet realize that it can best achieve this result by completely identifying itself with the realities of a predominantly rural “sixteenth century” setting, and the aspirations of an unsophisticated, but highly expectant, people. It follows that the emergent African university must, henceforth, be much more than an institution for teaching, research and dissemination of higher learning. It must be accountable to, and serve, the vast majority of the African people who live in rural areas. The African university must be committed to active participation in social transformation, economic modernization, and the training and upgrading of the total human resources of the nation, not just a small elite.

Regarding the structure and location of the public university within the government and the national educational system, there have been variations according to the types and structures
of the governments and the educational traditions inherited from the former colonial powers and emulated in the post-colonial era. In terms of their administrative structures, some of the public universities have been organized as a sub-sector within the ministry of education conceived as a state agency while others have been under the purview of a separate ministry of higher education (and scientific research), in centralized as well as decentralized systems. The African political elites of a wide range of ideologies and who held leadership positions in the immediate post-colonial contexts, committed themselves to consolidating the state powers and building unitary or Pan-African nation-states. Higher education was viewed and treated as a key facilitating institutional structure. Even the most notorious dictators who connived immediately or later with the relentless and brutal colonial systems to hinder the interest of the African people, in their own and respective ways emphasized the importance of strong publicly controlled higher education. This control involved the decision of the political elite to contain students and teaching staff and their critical perspectives and their pressure to pursue the independence struggle. However, there were also elements of different interpretations of the university as an instrument to guide the national project of development. Thus, in the Democratic Republic of Congo for example, where the some of the few African experiences with private higher education took place, a policy of nationalization of higher education was adopted in the 1970s.

The overwhelming majority of African universities were created from scratch following political independence, which process started in the late 1950s with a peak in 1960 for British, French and Belgian colonies, and continued through the 1970s for the Portuguese colonies, 1980 for Zimbabwe, 1990 for Namibia and the special case of majority rule since 1994 in South Africa. Even countries that were not independent yet at the time of the historic Addis Ababa Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa (UNESCO 1961) joined in a unanimous call for investment in education. At this Conference it was planned that by 1980, African countries would eliminate inequality at the primary education level by achieving universal enrollment, would increase significantly the transition rate to secondary education and ultimately produce at the higher education level academic, scientific, and administrative cadres who would help implement the national development project. Indeed, more broadly, this meeting was organized to define the educational needs for Africa toward its socio-economic development. Thus, as indicated above, education having been conceived as the defining social sector, it was funded accordingly, receiving the highest share of the countries’ gross national product (GNP) and public expenditures.
Commenting on encouraging progress made regarding the goals of universal primary enrollment as determined at the Addis Ababa Conference, Kenneth Kaunda confidently stated that by 1980 universal primary enrollment would be achieved and the next stage would be to achieve “universality in secondary and technical education. We have the will-power and determination in abundant proportions, and with the necessary financial and other capital resources being available, success should not be too elusive a goal” (Makulu 1971:xii).

Anticipated success in reaching universal secondary education was accompanied by the commitment to increase enrollment at the higher education level, especially considering that this was the targeted type of education for the development agenda. Indeed, the increase in the higher education enrollment was not conceived as a mere trickle-up process but rather as the result of an articulated national development policy need.

2. Patterns of Educational Expansion, Finance, Economic Crisis, and Resistance

An analysis of educational enrollment rates in Africa reveals patterns of growth, stagnation, and decline, especially in the 1980s, even in countries among some in the Sahelian sub-region that had barely reached half of the school-age population of the primary level. The 1980s were characterized by significant stagnation or decline in enrollment rates at all levels of the education systems in many African countries. This new and unanticipated phenomenon was in sharp contrast with the educational expansion of the two previous decades of the 1960s and 1970s that were characterized by constant steady increase of enrollment growth rates, although only a few of them reached universal primary enrollment during those two decades.

This downward trend of the 1980s caught many specialists by surprise as, based in part on historical experiences from other regions of the world and on the African performance of the 1960s-1970s, the steady increase in all the levels was expected until universal primary attendance is achieved and the law of compulsory attendance was expected to be de facto fully implemented.

Tables of Enrollment Patterns in 1960s-1980s (To be Inserted) and the Saps’ Correlation Analysis

After the brief episode of decline in several countries in the 1980s, demand for higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa resumed its upward trend, and it has remained high over the years. In analyzing the return of the high demand for education, it is worth recalling that most decisions made by social actors are guided by their utility function, given their socialization, their social class, and their major personal and social characteristics. The actual or perceived
returns of alternative choices are instrumental in the decision-making process. In this case, if the educational “consumers” of the 1980s in Africa changed their preference for education shown in the 1960s and 1970s, it could be hypothesized that they must have found better alternatives to education to satisfy their pursuit for socio-economic attainment.

Whether education is considered as a consumption or an investment has been a topic of debate in economics of education. It is difficult to identify a clear threshold on the continuum. Given the magnitude of the phenomenon, in countries like Togo with a sharp decline from primary to higher education were registered, educators and administrators were asking pressing questions including the following: Did African parents/students find more attractive alternatives to education? If so, as the declining enrollment rates were recorded simultaneously in primary, secondary and higher education, the next question was whether the youth and their families had had identified viable and more attractive alternatives in these three levels.

However, it was soon revealed soon that for the overwhelming majority of the youth and their families, a combination of critical and negative factors were influencing their decisions that translated into declining enrollment rates. These factors were all related to the economic crisis and the SAPs’ policies and conditionalities: 1) the institution of the user fees to attend school, from the elementary level to the university; 2) the powerful disincentive of the policy prescription of the World Bank requiring that African governments reduce the number of employees on government payroll and to stop hiring new job seekers.

Empirical studies (Lange 1984, Assie-Lumumba 1991) demonstrated that in general, the demand for education by families (parents and students) decreased significantly only when their economic resources diminished. Indeed, at the private level, affordability of education has been the key determining factor. In the absence of valuable alternatives to education, as was the case in the 1980s and even in this first decade of the 21st century, the major explanatory factor for the lower demand of education has been the increasing cost while the ability to pay was declining. These factors were compounded by the economic crisis, the rising unemployment and the bleak prospects on the labor market. In this context, as indicated above, only the absence of alternatives can motivate needy students and families to make extreme sacrifice to pay for education. Hence the renewed increase in the demand after the episode of the stagnation and decline of the 1980s.

According Johnstone (2004:12), the renewed high and increasing demand in the specific sub-sector of higher education is due to the rising birth rate as well as increases in the number of young people completing secondary school. The increase is quite remarkable considering the
shift from full government support to more of the direct cost borne by students and their families.

The persistent demand has led to some misleading conclusions. Indeed, while some have incorrectly referred to “massification”, enrollment to higher education in Africa in general remains very low. Given the high attrition rates from at the primary and secondary levels, only a small proportion of those who enter the system can move up to the higher education level, especially the university. In fact, Africa has the lowest higher education enrollment rates in comparison to other regions of the world. Indeed as Bloom, Canning, and Chan (2005, 5) rightly point out that:

Enrollment rates in higher education in sub-Saharan Africa are by far the lowest in the world. Although the gross enrolment ratio (GER) has increased in the past 40 years – it was just 1 per cent in 1965 – it still stands at only 5 per cent. … [Statistical evidence] shows that …the absolute gap by which it lags behind other regions has increased rapidly. The region’s present enrolment ratio is in the same range as that of other developing regions 40 years ago. Moreover, gender disparities have traditionally been wide and remain so.

Tertiary education is expensive and cost intensive, both in terms of infrastructure and resources needs. To set up institutions and support the needs of the offspring of the impoverished segments of the populations requires significant public funding.

Table 1: Gross Enrollment Ratio as Percentage of Total Eligible Population for Higher Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gross Enrollment Ratio, higher education (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Until the economic crisis and the beginning of the SAPs, in the 1970s, by any standards African countries allocated relatively large proportions of their revenues to education. In the second half of the 1970s the proportion of public expenditure on education increased further. For instance, it increased from 3.4 in 1975 to 5.2 percent in 1980, while the trend for all Third World countries combined showed clear signs of stagnation, with 3.3 percent in 1975 and 3.9 percent in 1980. However, as shown in the table below, during the 1980s, the trends were reversed. They were characterized by a steady decline that could be already observed in the table below.

Table 2: Percentages of Public Expenditures and GNP Allocated to Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PUBLIC EXPENDITURES</th>
<th>GNP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Following the economic crisis of the 1980s/1990s and the unquestionably devastating SAPs, public expenditure per higher education student declined drastically, from $6,300 to $1,500 and then $1,000 in real terms (World Bank 1994). At the same time, generally speaking, African countries continued some of their initial post-independence public education finance policies consisting of allocation of large proportions of their GNP and public expenditure to education, with a larger (yet insufficient) share for higher education.

Tables on Educational Expenditure in at the End of The Text (To Be Inserted)

The recent statistics shown in the figures in the annex indicate that since the end of the 1990s, there have been variable trends in different countries with a tendency toward either stagnation or a slight increase. It can be argued that given the needs of an overwhelmingly poor population and the sheer need for expansion of the capacity of the higher education infrastructures, it would have been socially and politically untenable if there had been additional constraints restricting access to higher education. Also, in the African countries,
the proportions of their GNP and public expenditures allocated to education, especially higher education, reached rock bottom in the 1980s with the economic crisis of the SAPs policies. Thus, African countries could only stabilize and renew, albeit timidly, their support for higher education, given the internal pressure to open up, in spite of the external pressures to push the African states to further disengagement.

In some studies, it has been articulated that ability to pay is not positively related to the demand of education (Berstecher and Carr-Hill 1990). However, refined analysis of the situation suggests that regardless of the means of families, the assurance that the state would provide the resources needed could constitute a determinant of private demand for education.

The universities of post-colonial Africa were designed to operate in African regional/cross-national or individual settings with nationalistic missions and the discourse of autonomy to implement these missions. Certainly, in terms of their internal daily organization and financial management, African institutions, like others, developed their respective massive structures and bounded processes that give them a sense of autonomy. In reality, this autonomy was challenged by the ideology and actions/policies of the ruling class/state because higher education has been part of the state apparatus that was a colonial creation. Universities did not enjoy an autonomy that could guarantee academic freedom and nurture critical thinking as a necessary asset in conceiving, formulating, and implementing autonomous development agendas. Thus, these newly designed institutions contained the seeds of major contradictions from their inception. Indeed, they were modeled after, and depended on, the institutions of the former colonial powers for their curriculum development, administrative style, and conferring of diplomas. The full provision of funding by the state was another dimension of the limited autonomy. Thus, the state and weak, uncommitted, and unprincipled leaders could freely accept external policies, even the ones that were philosophically in contradiction with their own stated engagement for building higher education for socio-economic development. The adoption of the SAPs constituted an example of this contradiction.

The public university in Africa was a corollary of, and dialectically related to, the national development project. It was conceived to be a public institution with a public mission in addressing with effectiveness the challenges of the development process.
3. The Global Dynamics, A New Arena for Resistance and the Call for Renewed Engagement

In the conception of higher education designed according to a narrow interpretation of human capital theory, critical thinking did not receive particular consideration as part of the most obvious and directly needed skills to be acquired by the formally and highly educated. Rather, the emphasis was being placed on acquisition of technical skills. Indeed, throughout Africa, the idea embedded in the classical conception of the development university emphasized the production of highly qualified “manpower,” human capital, and human resources in general. The educated were expected to apply technical savoir faire to programs and projects in the African development process. As Kenneth Kaunda (Makulu 1971:x) stated:

governments should … avoid seeing in the university academics and their students potential enemies waiting in the wing to pounce on the stage and assume the reins of power! They must reassure the universities that they are an essential and integral part of the national development process and not a dissident minority committed to the course of destructive criticism.

Ironically, the critical mind was not only essential for the appropriate conceptualization, design and implementation of the national development envisioned, but it became indispensable in the struggle that had to be waged every time the institutions of higher learning have been under siege. Under the Native Law, colonial power made it impossible for the Africans to have access to higher education in the continent or in the metropolis. Thus, the struggle for decolonization included the fight to acquire the rights to education of any type and any level. Since then, there have been various forms of policies working against Africans’ aim to build and maintain thriving and autonomous institutions of higher learning. These hindering policies range from the subtle but effective neo-colonial framework of control embedded in multilateral and bilateral economic “assistance”, the direct and destructive policies of the SAPs in the 1980s and the ongoing global grip of the GATS in this period of the beginning of the 21st century. Yet, national and autonomous institutions remain necessary for the grand idea of national and autonomous development that constituted the raison d’être of the newly created universities at the time of independence.

In the absence of other means of political expression until the multiparty system was legally established in the 1990s, in many countries, the university tended to be the main ground for
political opposition. There has been latent and often open conflicts between the governments, which want agreement and cohesion, and the academic communities which tend to value debate and criticism and want to exercise the right to reject external policies such as the SAPs that are visibly destructive to Africa. In the case of Côte d’Ivoire where the former opposition formed mainly of higher education teaching staff, the behavior and performance of the state has not changed. Thus, it is the behavior of the political regimes that sustains the absence of possibilities for change. Therefore, the powers, forces, and entities against which resistance is formulated and waged from the site of the university are internal and external.

The internal and external forces have evolved since the beginning of the independence process. The African state, even those headed by notorious dictators, had some real or disguised benevolent character that was reflected in their disposition toward the funding of social services including education. The state has been undergoing a process of disempowerment and deliberate weakening engineered by the colonial proxies and their liberalization policies. In the same vein, the colonial proxies, composed by the international financial institutions and also former colonial powers that are still direct actors, have increased their influence and imposed monopolies in the political and economic systems of governance and production through liberalism and globalization. The corollaries of these global agencies have been the new definitions of the roles of the African states and the nature of African institutions of higher learning. Like the elusive yet destructive “colonial agreement” that constituted the ground for colonial domination and exploitation in which the economies of African countries were redesigned to provide cheap raw materials for the industrialization of colonial power, recent imposed policies of SAPs and GATS which covers all levels and types of education constitute the framework of the functioning of African states and their institutions as defined by external powers.

In spite of the magnitude of economic and financial challenges that the creation of any institution of higher learning has involved, especially the development the public university, the African countries have treated this institution as a national honor symbol of sovereignty, pride, and irrefutable rights. These sentiments have been expressed from the government to the non-formally educated peasants and urban dwellers at the periphery of the cities. They are equally engaged in the quest for producing and using the highest level of knowledge and human resources as national treasure. It is associated with the principle of sovereignty of each state to articulate its autonomy through the creation of a public university, not as a mere source of simple vanity, but as a site for the production of critical human resources.
The model of public funding of the university is necessary in African contexts. Indeed, the benevolent and caring state can meet Africa’s needs for services, considering its objective conditions, especially as the largest proportion of the population is still overwhelmingly impoverished and is struggling against the overpowering global liberalization with its mantra of relentless, merciless and essentially unfair system of competition. Their struggle is an uphill battle against a faceless and impersonal system that works against their efforts to set themselves free from the poverty trap. Unlike the former colonial powers and other industrial countries, African societies have not yet produced an industrial base or major alternative sources free of conditionalities as would make it possible to provide quality university education. Even in the industrial counties of Western Europe among which are the former colonial powers, continue to provide higher education free of charge. In France for instance, university is synonymous with public university. Africa has even more compelling reasons to renew a commitment for public-funded higher education. Indeed, in addition to the legendary peasants, new sites of needy population segments have been created in small towns and major cities.

Because of increased hardship and hopelessness in the countrysides across the continent, people have been attracted to the cities with their actual and also misleading signs of opportunities. They congregate in major slums most of which do not offer better living conditions than in many rural communities. It is safe to argue that for many of these population, especially their aspiring youth, the social distance between them and university education has become longer than the hitherto distance between rural communities and the institutions of higher learning.

With these increased challenges amidst the liberalization and global competitive world, the role of a caring state must be unequivocally paramount in protecting basic needs, creating institutions and possibilities, and providing services that can harness people’s potentials. The increasing globalization calls powerfully for a renewed and unprecedented commitment to lift the impoverished and trigger a process for sustainable development and substantive social progress. The global pressure and prescription of generic private sector solutions can only exacerbate the situation unless private initiatives are integrated in a clearly articulated and monitored public people-centered national development agenda.

In a recent book *Power, Politics and Higher Education in Southern Africa: International Regimes, Local Governments, and Educational Autonomy* Cossa (2008) articulates the mechanisms through which what he refers to as “global agencies” which continue to effectively facilitate the perpetuation of the colonial system and to strengthen and to widen
global structure of the domination of African spaces of official sovereignty with higher education as a major target. He argues that these global proxies of the old colonial systems created the SAPs, WTO, GATS, and the like, which have immediate and predictable future impact on the African higher education systems. These African institutions are targeted for integration into the global systems with their “binding obligations” and barely disguised effort to coerce African countries to accept their prescribed “liberalization” framework that inevitably lead to empowering external forces and weakening the internal agencies.

One instrument that has been used to lure African countries to accept external control is technology, specifically the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Given Africans’ dire need to increase possibilities for access to higher education enrollment, and satisfy the persistent demand, the option of ICTs tends to be presented as a panacea. In *Harnessing Distance Learning and ICT for Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: an Examination of Experiences Useful for the Design of Widespread and Effective Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Till (2003:35) argues that there is evidence of “some successes ... and [that] recent ICT innovations are making a significant difference in enabling new approaches and in helping existing approaches to work better.” However, he also points out that:

Where the architects and developers are external, they have found it difficult to adapt approaches to African cultural realities and resource constraints and to properly identify and define the needs of end users. Internal/African-led projects have fared no better in terms of meeting end-user needs, with fundamental problems in materials quality and support structures. Client governments and institutions — and their advisers — have understandably inconsistent views on needs and priorities with the desire for early and scalable success using imported content sometimes more appealing than slower capacity building approaches (Ibid.).

In “*Marketizing Higher Education: Neo-liberal Strategies and Counter-Strategies*” Levidow (2001) also warns against the potential entrapment embedded in the neoliberal strategies that aim to marketize higher education on a global scale. Based on his observation of the global trends, Levidow contends that “[T]he World Bank ‘reform agenda’ for the self-financing of higher education” constitute the biggest threat for “Africa, where higher education is being forcibly marketized and standardized through financial dependence” (Levidow 2001:2).
In “The African Renaissance and Technology Transfer”, Fourie (2000) points out that Africa has obvious technological needs, but also warns against the naive belief that would view technological transfer as:

an ever-benevolent panacea for our developmental ills. In fact, some transfers of technology can do more harm than good. Technology needs to be appropriate to the context into which it is transferred, and appropriate technological application is dependent upon a multitude of factors … [such as], 1. the absorptive capacity of the technology recipient [with] ... technicians, scientists and engineers to indiginize the new knowledge... 2. considerations such as the prioritization of national sovereignty [by anticipating and addressing the challenge of] some technology suppliers such as multinational corporations might only donate or sell technologies in order to gain a foot in new markets and to monopolize economic sectors, and 3. the question [of] whether the imported technology is compatible with local cultural and economic conditions (eg. will local resources be utilised and will concurrent industrial pollution disrupt the local environment?) (Fourie 2000:2-3)

Education is the process through which technical skills and values are provided to the present and future generations of a society based on internal needs carefully identified. One of the dangers in technology is to reduce knowledge to technical and piecemeal delivery. Indeed, critical knowledge must be carefully conceived, delivered, and monitored as part of the national system.

**Conclusion**

Based on people’s aspirations to development, dynamic expressions of democracies, and tangible world resources, there are enough resources to boost higher education. But based on the realities and the expectations for real chance for a better life, the exercises of critical reflection can only conclude there will not be generous financial support devoid of interest. Given the urgency to fix the global imbalance of development and the role of education in general and especially higher education, there is legitimacy in the call to search for integrative solutions for sustainable global development. Indeed, the legitimacy of the global system itself and its agencies should depend on their capacities and the dynamics of their philosophical foundation to promote and sustain equality in higher education. This equality is also a requirement for developmental project in which education plays a central role.

By and large, through various mechanisms, private institutions rely on considerable subsidies from the state to function. The public mission of higher education must include private
institutions as part of a national agenda. While any dogmatic rejection of non-governmental initiatives may not be helpful or realistic, as private African and external well-meaning contribution must be encouraged, it is indispensable to included them in the national development plans.

The future of African development in the knowledge economy cannot afford any more spare-part projects with external global agents in the driver seat. Social progress in Africa in the 21st century calls for a renewal of an engaged and caring state.

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ANNEX

Figures to Be Integrated in the Revised Full Text and Analyzed

**Public expenditure on education as % of GDP: Morocco**

![Graph showing public expenditure on education as % of GDP for Morocco from 1991 to 2005.]

**Public expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure: Morocco**

![Graph showing public expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure for Morocco from 1991 to 2005.]

Public expenditure on education as % of GDP: South Africa

Educational Expenditure By Level: Mauritania
Educational Expenditure By Level: Morocco

Year
1999  2000  2001  2002  2003*  2004  2005

Educational Expenditure By Level: Tunisia

Year

Educational Expenditure By Level: Cote d'Ivoire

Year
1999  2000
Educational Expenditure By Level: Congo

Educational Expenditure By Level: Zambia

*UIS Estimation (All figures)

All figures made using data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)