

Re-Visioning Africa's Tertiary Education in the Transition to a Knowledge Economy

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Talking Notes for the Panel Discussion on
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Setting the Stage

1. It is a pleasure to join you here in Johannesburg to discuss Africa's tertiary education system in the transition to a knowledge economy. "Knowledge for Africa's Development," which is the theme of this conference, is essentially the overarching mission of my organization – The World Bank. Our long-term goal for Africa is to progressively close the development gap with the rest of the world so that the people of Africa have access to standards of living that are comparable to those available elsewhere. To register progress on this front, Africa will need higher levels of growth, productivity and job creation. This, in turn, will require countries to invest more strategically in the key drivers of growth. In the World Bank's *Africa Action Plan*, we have clearly pointed to tertiary education as one of these key drivers. What I would like to share with you today are my views on what could be done to better position tertiary education in Africa's transition to the knowledge economy.

The Global Context

2. ***Fast growing demand for tertiary education and increasing private investment.*** Since the late 1980's, the global market for tertiary education has been growing at an average rate of 7% per annum. Annual income from tuition fees is estimated to be over USD 30 billion, increasingly from private sources. In Korea, for example, 80% of tertiary education is privately funded. In some of the developed countries, tertiary education has become a major "industry." In Australia, for instance, it contributes more than USD 4 billion annually to GDP, surpassing the earnings of the country's main agricultural products – wool and wheat. The USA presently hosts about 586,000 international students, most whom pay fees. Global annual spending on tertiary education amounts to about USD 300 billion or 1% of global economic output (World Bank). Worldwide, more than 80 million tertiary students pursue their studies with the help of 3.5 million additional people who are employed in teaching and related work..

3. This global trend is reflected on the African continent. Between 1985 and 2002 the number of tertiary students increased by 2.6 times (from 800 thousand to about 3 million) – on average by about 15% yearly. If continued at this rate, African tertiary enrollments will double every five years. Average annual enrollment growth is particularly strong in Rwanda (55%), Namibia (46%), Uganda (37%), Tanzania (32%), Cote d'Ivoire (28%), Kenya (27%), Chad (27%), Botswana (22%), and Cameroon (22%).

Average Annual Tertiary Enrollment Growth Rates in Africa (%)

Region	1985-90	1990-95	1995-98	1998-02
Francophone	8.2	6.2	7.9	11.0
Anglophone	12.3	4.4	1.8	18.2
Lusophone	6.2	2.9	13.4	37.6
Sub-Saharan Africa	11.1	4.7	3.5	17.2

4. Because public investment has not been able to keep up with this frenetic pace, private investment is also becoming important in Africa. Out of roughly 300 universities operating today in Sub-Saharan Africa, about one-third are privately funded. The majority of these have been established since the year 2000. In public institutions, student fees are becoming a significant

contribution to recurrent budgets. Fully 70 percent of expenditures at the University of The Gambia are derived from student fees. At the University of Nairobi, student cost-sharing produced 37 percent of the institution's recurrent budget in 2002.¹ In Ghana, student fees contributed 31 percent of university budgets in 2005.²

5. **New Methods of Delivery.** With the advent of ICT came revolutionary changes in the mode of delivery of education. Online education is growing, even within regular "brick and mortar" institutions. In other words, "brick" universities are increasingly becoming "brick and click" universities giving students more options to learn, in addition to the traditional face-to-face lecture. These new methods also render tertiary education "borderless" – students can participate in a course program irrespective of their geographical location.

6. In Africa this trend is expressed in the growing attention accorded to building capacities for distance education. The region now hosts four open universities, with plans to establish at least two more in the near future. Likewise, the provision of education "at a distance" by traditional universities is steadily expanding.

7. **Increasing Competition.** Tertiary education has become more competitive especially given the increasing private sector participation, increasing demand for accountability, limited public funding for tertiary education, and the advent of borderless tertiary education. Competition in the developed world is forcing some institutions to seek new, easy to access markets in developing countries. Some (e.g., Monash University and RMIT of Australia) have established their satellite campuses, or are partnering with local institutions in developing countries to offer their degree programs in areas that have ready markets, e.g., business management and information technology. In view of the perceived greater recognition and marketability of foreign degrees, and the certainty of completing the degree within a prescribed period of time without the fear of interruption due to student crises, these 'name brand degrees' are becoming increasingly popular, posing a rising challenge for local universities in some countries.

8. **Increased Attention to Quality and Relevance.** Quality assurance and accreditation have become very important as students increasingly look for quality and ranking before they select a university degree program. In the developing world, the rapid emergence of private tertiary education has created the need for quality assurance agencies to regulate providers and protect consumers. At least a dozen African countries have established national quality assurance agencies for tertiary education. In the few places (e.g. in South Africa and Nigeria) where the ranking of study programs and/or tertiary institutions is being practiced, institutional leaders are increasingly paying attention to quality since employers have begun reacting to the outcome of these ranking exercises. But the capacity to implement world-class quality assurance is limited and the costs are beyond the means of most developing countries. .

9. **Shorter Knowledge Life Cycles.** In the knowledge-based economy, knowledge doubles every 3-5 years depending on the discipline. Recently, some predictions suggest that by 2020, it will double every 75 days or so. To keep pace with such an extraordinary rate of development, a graduate will require continuous learning in order to maintain professional proficiency. In other

¹ Kiamba, Crispus. 2003. "The Experience of the Privately Sponsored Studentship and Other Income Generating Activities at the University of Nairobi." A case study prepared for the Regional Training Conference on *Improving Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Things that Work!* Accra, Ghana: September 23-25, 2003.

² Adu, Kingsley and François Orivel, 2006. *Tertiary Education Funding Strategy in Ghana*. Report to the National Council of Tertiary Education. Accra, Ghana.

words, a knowledge-based worker will find it necessary to earn the equivalent of several degrees in his/her lifetime through self-learning. Thus, graduates will need to keep tending their stock of knowledge and updating their skills and competencies so that their knowledge and skills can remain relevant (and competitive). A new type of university that caters for this clientele is emerging. The University of Phoenix in the USA is a case in point.

10. ***Increasing Cross-Border Collaboration.*** Countries within the same geographical and political regions are increasingly recognizing the need to collaborate in order to facilitate mobility of students and skilled labor in an orderly manner. The Bologna process within the European Union is a good example. Harmonization of study programs, qualifications and awards of tertiary institutions is also being pursued as a way to strengthen cohesion within the peoples of the regional block – a cohesion which eventually is likely to have positive dividends to trade, peace and security. One example of this within Africa is the 2005 creation of the Southern African Universities Regional Association (SARUA), which is pursuing collaboration among its multiple country members in ICT infrastructure, specialized graduate programs, and management training.

11. ***Closer Links to Trade and Investment Policies.*** With globalization, tertiary education curricular and research programs in developed and medium income countries are being restructured to be better support national trade and investment policies. This means more flexibility in making changes, including de-establishing traditional programs to give room to niche programs that are better aligned to the prevailing trade and investment priorities. Within Africa, Mauritius constitutes a prime example of this new approach, and Ethiopia is beginning to give it serious consideration.

12. ***Skilled Emigration Is Increasing, But Countries Are Tapping Into Their Diasporas.*** Emigration of skilled human resources – defined as emigration after completion of tertiary education – is on the rise worldwide, particularly in emerging countries. Recent studies show that emigration of skilled workers in countries with populations greater than 20 million ranged from 0.6% in Brazil to 15% in Uganda per annum³. Attempts by sending countries to curb emigration through prohibition and taxation have failed. Some receiving (developed) countries (e.g. Britain, the USA, Australia and Canada) have put in place deliberate incentives (pull factors) to attract skilled workers from developing countries. The debate on the economic effects of skilled emigration on the sending countries remains inconclusive.

13. Sending countries are making conscious efforts to recover more of the skills and resources of their skilled emigrants. For example, 40 percent of the companies started in Taiwan's Hsichinchu Science Based Industrial Park were led by returned expatriates. Strategies employed for this purpose include measures to ease reentry of skilled emigrants, attractive visiting professor/expert programs, establishment of public bodies to encourage and assist skilled nationals to return home, and incentives for skilled nationals in the Diaspora to invest in their countries.⁴ The Economic Commission for Africa estimates that 20,000 professionals a year left Africa during the 1990s and that, overall, Africa has lost 30% of its stock of skilled human resources.⁵ Increasingly, countries as diverse as Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa have established Diaspora networks designed to build and make use of their respective pools of emigrant talent.

³ Lowell, Lindsay B. & Allan Findlay (2001). *Migration of Highly Skilled Persons from Developing Countries*, Geneva: International Labor Organization.

⁴ Saxenian, Anna Lee (1999). *Silicon Valley's New Immigrant Entrepreneurs*.

⁵ Economic Commission for Africa. 1999. *Economic Report on Africa*. Addis Ababa: ECA

14. Where is Africa within the shifting topography of the global tertiary education landscape? What has been Africa's response? Are the responses adequate? Which areas need increased attention? What are the trade-offs and what should be the priorities? These are some of the pertinent questions that we need to find answers to in the quest to strengthen the participation of tertiary education in building knowledge-based economies.

The Africa Context

15. ***The differences between Africa and the industrialized countries of the north are well known. But what is of most concern is the growing difference between SSA and the other developing countries,*** some of which were at similar levels of development four decades ago but are now registering the greatest gains towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. For example China, where 375 million people lived on less than \$1 a day in 1990, is expected to bring that number down to 16 million by 2015. India is projected to cut its number of poor people from 462 million to 216 million over the same period. But under current trends, in Africa the numbers go the other way—from 227 million people living on less than \$1 a day in 1990 to 340 million in 2015. What have China and India done that African nations might learn from?

16. ***The steady diffusion of science and technology-based innovations has played a key role in stepping up global economic expansion and accelerating trade, but the resulting benefits have largely eluded Africa.*** Between 1961 and 1998, world food production doubled, with 93 percent of the increase coming from higher yields derived from improved crop and soil science, but only 7 percent from putting more land under cultivation. During the same time period in Africa, 60 percent of the increase in cereal yields came from putting additional land under cultivation.⁶

17. With food security achieved, some countries began investing intensively in their scientific and technological capabilities, laying the foundations for their industrial growth. Partially because of this, ***the number of scientific articles published worldwide grew by 40 percent between 1988 and 2001. But in Africa, the number of published articles fell by 12 percent during the same period.***⁷ How can African research capacities be revitalized?

18. Despite this troubling picture, some encouraging ***signs of hope*** are emerging in Sub-Saharan Africa:

- Some 18 countries in SSA registered annual economic growth rates of 5 percent or more during the last 5 years with impressive impact on poverty reduction. For example, following a period of sustained growth, Uganda reduced the proportion of its people living in absolute poverty from 56% to 35% between 1992 and 2000.
- The region is increasingly attracting trade and investment from Asia – particularly China, Taiwan and India. Africa's exports to China increased to USD 8 billion in 2003 from USD 1 billion a decade earlier.
- In 2005, the international community agreed to double assistance to Africa from USD 25 billion to USD 50 billion by 2010, to open their markets to African products, and to forgive the debts of fourteen of the poorest countries on the continent. To

⁶ Pardey and Bientema. 2001. "Slow Magic: Agricultural R&D A Century After Mendel." IFPRI Food Policy Report, Washington, DC.

⁷ US National Science Foundation. 2002. "Science and Engineering Indicators 2002" Arlington, VA.

implement this resolve, the World Bank is expected to provide more than USD 37 billion in multilateral debt relief over the next 40 years. The primary beneficiaries of this historic initiative will be the social sectors (education, health and social protection) in Africa.

- Primary enrollment rates have increased dramatically to nearly 96 percent in 2003 from 80 percent in 1980, holding the promise that many more Africans will be in a position to contribute to and benefit from an expanding economy. As a result, illiteracy rates dropped from an average of 42 percent in 1997 to 35 percent in 2002.
- Impressive developments in communications are underway. Cell phone usage in SSA is on the rise with over 50 million subscribers at present – more than twice the number of land lines.

In summary, one can conclude that in Africa, there is now more reason for hope in the midst of hardship than at any time in the past two decades.

How Does Africa's Tertiary Education System Match Up?

19. The state of tertiary education in Africa also blends hope with hardship. ***The threat of collapse has passed and a wave of change is gaining momentum.*** During the last decade, many African countries have recognized the need to reform their tertiary education systems. The most remarkable reform has been in response to demand for increased access. As noted in Table 1, overall tertiary enrolment in Sub-Saharan Africa surged by over 260 percent during the past two decades.

20. This expansion has been achieved through two main avenues: (a) exploding enrollments in public tertiary institutions, including the creation of new ones; and (b) a rapid growth of private provision of tertiary education. In a few cases, expansion of enrollment was largely achieved through reforms to increase internal efficiency with minimal investment in new facilities. Also, many institutions now follow strategic planning processes based on careful analysis and stakeholder consultations. In the process, new type of university that focuses more directly on the immediate development needs of its surrounding community (and less on high level research) has emerged. Examples include the Kigali Institute of Technology in Rwanda, the University of Development Studies in Ghana, and Jimma University in Ethiopia. As noted in paragraph 4 above, students and their families are increasingly willing to pay for tertiary education. At the same time, governments are loosening their grip on the governance of tertiary institutions, leaving the responsibility to semi-autonomous buffer bodies and regulatory agencies – and representative university councils. Increasing demand, participation of the private sector and willingness-to-pay combine to create the conditions for African countries to increase levels of skills and knowledge. But capitalizing on this will require strategic policy attention and actions that are often difficult to carry out, mainly due to capacity limitations.

21. ***Most institutions and national systems are still unable to meet the current challenges..*** Slow response to change, inadequate financial resources to expand facilities to meet increasing demand, brain drain, aging and insufficient numbers of academic staff, absence of innovation in curricula and teaching methods, administrative inefficiencies, insufficient freedom to introduce necessary reforms and management strategies, poor research output, and unemployment of graduates are among the major challenges that remain to be addressed if Africa is to develop a vibrant, competitive tertiary education that serves as a key driver for economic growth. In essence, tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa is challenged by a tension between rising demand for

access and the struggle to raise and maintain quality and relevance. Politically, expanded access has many parents, but improved quality is usually an orphan. Although average tertiary enrollment in Africa remains low and far behind the rest of the developing world, on-going reforms suggest that the problem of access is being adequately addressed whereas relevance remains a concern. And participation in the knowledge economy places a premium on educational relevance at all levels.

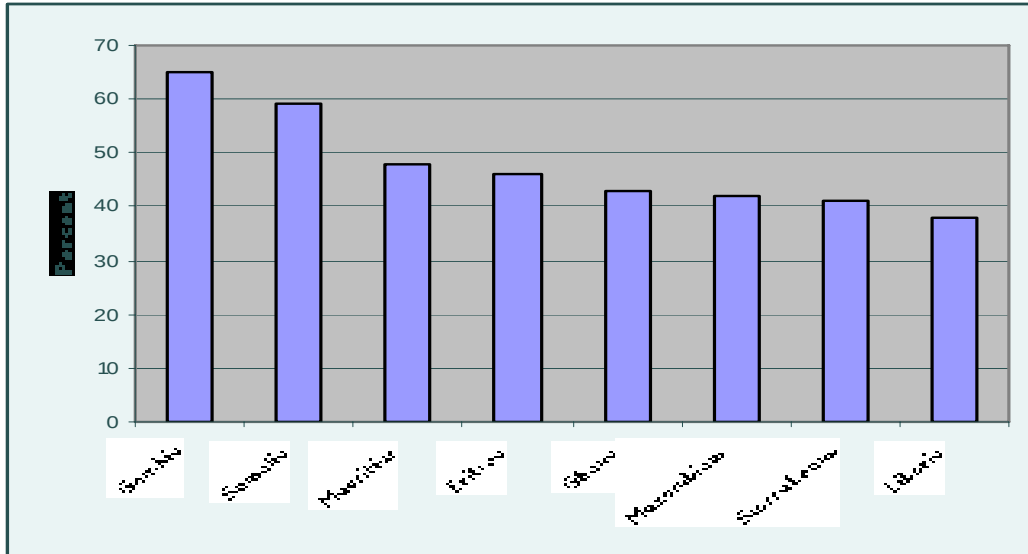
22. ***Quality of tertiary education remains elusive.*** Rapid expansion of enrollments in public tertiary institutions in most cases led to decline in quality since it was not matched with commensurate increases in funding. At the same time, some of the private tertiary institutions being established are profit-oriented with little regard for quality. In a dozen countries, government response has been to establish quality assurance agencies. But lacking the requisite capacity and financial resources to do the work, they have too often been reduced to agencies for the licensing of private tertiary institutions. Well over half of African countries have yet to establish any mechanism for quality assurance.

23. ***Weak links with the labor market, as well as with trade and investment strategies.*** It is disturbing that even in countries with very low gross enrollment ratios (e.g. Tanzania with tertiary GRE of 1 percent compared to an average of 5 percent for SSA), many graduates fail to find employment in their areas of study. This is likely the result of a mismatch between the educational programs that tertiary institutions offer and the needs of the labor market and, increasingly, the prevailing trade and investment strategies. Better synergy between trade and investment strategies, labor market requirements, and the content of tertiary education will be necessary if the momentum of Africa's recent economic growth is to be maintained. Even more than quality, relevance stands out as the region's biggest challenge in tertiary education.

24. ***SSA has the highest emigration of skilled workers.*** Skilled workers are needed to adopt and adapt new technologies because they are more productive and better at dealing with change.⁸ Yet SSA has the highest emigration of skilled workers, primarily to OECD countries. The percentage of tertiary-educated migrants in the region's emigration increased from 23% in 1990 to 31.4% in 2000.⁹ The chart below shows the share of tertiary-educated emigrants within total migration flows for selected countries (Gambia, Somalia, Mauritius, Eritrea, Ghana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Liberia).

⁸ World Development Report 2005. Chapter 7: *Workers and Labor Markets*, pp. 138.

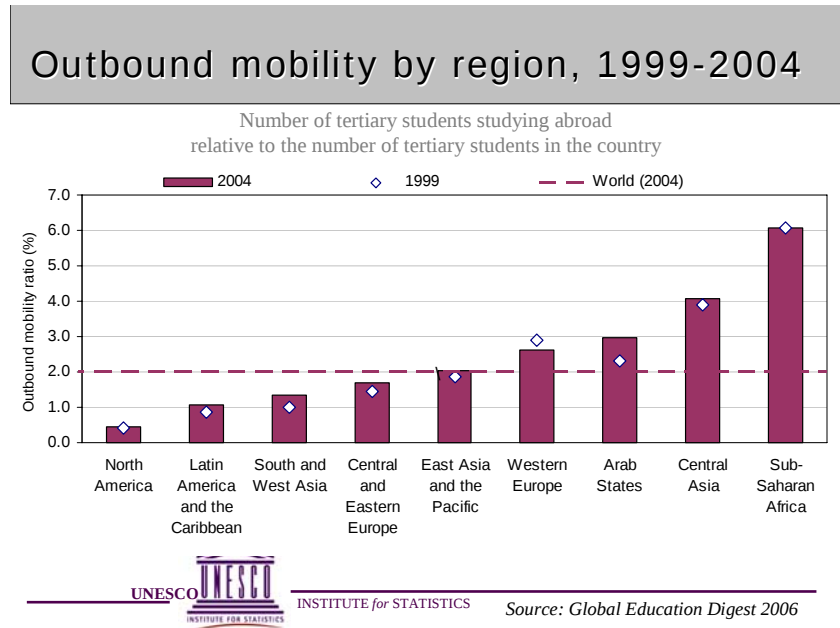
⁹ Docquier, Frédéric, and Marfouk, Abdeslam. 2004. *Measuring the International Mobility of Skilled Workers, 1990-2000*.



Source: Docquier, Frédéric, and Marfouk, 2004

25. Most emigrants are initially attracted abroad by the quality and status attached to tertiary institutions in those countries. But at the completion of their studies, too few return home to apply their new skills. According to recent research by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, one out of every two international African students studies in Western Europe (51%), followed by SSA (21%) and North America (20%). As shown in the figure below, SSA has the highest proportion in the world of students studying abroad in comparison with those studying at home (6%).

Figure 1: Outbound Mobility of tertiary student by region, 1999-2004



26. The picture is not all gloomy. Several excellent academic institutions have developed in Africa. Many more possess departments or faculties in which excellence can be found. However, the point being made is that the constraints stated above prevent them from being as good as they could be, and from doing as much as they should do for their societies.

What Additional Reforms Merit Consideration?

27. Africa's tertiary education system is very diverse and no single model for reform can possibly be applied to all countries and institutions within them. However, some cross-cutting themes are discernible that could form the basis of a reform agenda. These are: governance; financing; creation of a favorable climate for retention of qualified staff; forging stronger links with labor market, trade and investment strategies; and partnerships or regional collaboration, including strategies for leveraging Diaspora talent.

o Governance and Management

28. Except in very few cases, public tertiary institutions are largely funded by the Government. As a result, Ministries responsible for tertiary education exercise control over how the funds are being applied. Although legally these institutions are autonomous, in some countries this is no more than a proverbial fig-leaf. If universities are to thrive in this rapidly changing global environment, they need to be able to respond quickly to change and to be accountable for their actions. Thus, while public funding remains important and necessary, the need for further changes in the way tertiary institutions are governed and managed is becoming increasingly clear. How this will be done must be determined by each country itself, taking into account local circumstances. This means, however, that *the funding regime has to change as well*. One possible way is to use block funding (based on an agreed formula) and give the institutions the freedom to decide on how to apply the funds and while holding them accountable for their decisions.

29. But for this to happen, tertiary institutions must convince their governments and society that they provide good value for money. They need to demonstrate accountability for their actions, to work constantly towards higher internal efficiency, and to market themselves actively within the nation and beyond. Professional management and effective quality assurance (and accreditation) systems are key to achieving this. But as stated above, the capacity to carry out quality assurance is weak. *We need to reflect on how to strengthen quality assurance capacity in a cost-effective manner.*

o Financing

30. To offer tertiary education relevant to the knowledge economy, institutions must have more resources. Yet government budgets are over-stretched and cannot be considered as a source of additional finance. Other options must therefore be developed. In some countries, institutions are prevented by law from raising revenue that students would be willing to pay. Tuition fees, student loan schemes, fees-for-services, and control of the pace of expansion are further options for diversifying tertiary education financing and making it more sustainable.

31. Experience with publicly funded student loan schemes in SSA so far has been marred by low collection rates, especially where graduates do not find employment immediately following graduation, and also by difficulties in identifying truly needy students (i.e., means testing) and tracking graduates once they leave campus. Direct tuition fees systems (as applied in The Gambia, for example) have proved to be cheaper and more successful but raise questions of equity. What could be the most optimal approach? *We need to devise financing strategies that generate additional resources for tertiary education while being feasible and equitable under African circumstances.*

o *Creation of a Favorable Climate for Staff Retention*

32. A study by the University of Dar es Salaam's Faculty of Engineering in 1989 revealed that the main cause of staff dissatisfaction and eventual departure for greener pastures was the unfavorable working environment, characterized by lack of management transparency, poor facilities for teaching and research, and low remuneration. By addressing these concerns, changing the approach to staff training, and allowing staff to use their skills in a transparent and managed manner to supplement their income, staff retention within the Faculty improved impressively over a short period of time. *Paying more attention to the local working environment, even without large increases in salaries, can generate major dividends in staff retention.*

33. As enrollment increases rapidly, it outstrips local capacities to generate commensurate numbers of qualified academic staff. Increasingly, the aging academic staff in most universities is spread too thin. In some countries, AIDS also takes its toll on staff numbers. Sending young staff for PhD training abroad is expensive and exacerbates brain drain. *Domestic graduate education programs are the solution for training future academic staff to the PhD level.* At least for an initial period, this may require strong partnerships with other universities (both in the south and the north) as capacity for local research and supervision is likely to be limited. The regional USHEPiA program at the University of Cape Town is a good example of such a partnership. Simultaneously, institutions should strive to strengthen their research capacity and consider tapping the intellectual talent of the African Diaspora.

34. Improving conditions of service might inevitably require tertiary institutions to de-link themselves from national civil service systems. These systems were not designed for small numbers of highly specialized academic staff. In most cases, their uncompetitive conditions of service have made it nearly impossible to recruit and retain academic staff. And in some countries, staff unions have actively defended this public servant status. How best to implement staff retention reforms remains a question. *Is it time to consider introducing a merit-based tenure system that allows differentiated remuneration depending on performance? What strategies could be applied to engage the African Diaspora in strengthening academic staffing on the continent?*

o *Forging Stronger Links with the Labor Market, Trade Strategies & Investment Priorities*

35. The dual existence of high social demand for tertiary education and unemployment of graduates calls for reforms in tertiary institutions' curricula to better align them with labor market needs, trade strategies and investment priorities. Given current shortages of resources and qualified people, this implies a need for greater selectivity in public and institutional investments. Common sense suggests that governments should concentrate public funding in areas with the highest likely impact on economic growth and in key public service provision. Again, the choices will differ from country to country. But evidence from emerging countries in Asia and Latin America suggests that among these are agriculture, the sciences, engineering, business, and technical disciplines related to food security, transport, communications, energy, and health. To make effective choices will require the cooperation of more than just the tertiary education

community. *Who should make these choices and how? Do tertiary institutions have the requisite skills to engage with those responsible for trade strategies and investment policies?*

o Working Together – Global Partnerships and Regional Collaboration

36. As a global economy makes the world a more competitive place, strategic partnerships are necessary to maintain and advance competitive positions.¹⁰ The small size of African economies cannot support the creation of a sufficient number of world class tertiary institutions to meet the demand in each country. Regional collaboration helps to achieve economies of scale, especially for capital intensive and highly specialized disciplines in the sciences, engineering and medicine. In addition, maintaining adequate levels of educational quality and relevance requires active and sustainable access to global knowledge through professional interchanges, library resources, or joint research opportunities. Strong partnerships with other tertiary institutions around the world, when supported by modern information and communications technologies, make this increasingly possible.

37. African universities are no strangers to academic partnerships. The University of Dar es Salaam, with its reported total of 133 institutional partnerships in 1995, illustrates the challenge.¹¹ But too often, such cooperation agreements are merely expressions of academic good will or the product of transient opportunities. Their numbers are generally more impressive than the quality of the contributions they make. What most African universities need are partnerships that are few in number, strategically chosen, and equitable in the benefits provided to each partner. Such partnerships hold the potential to make an institution stronger, more competitive, and more relevant. To achieve this, these partnerships must emerge directly from an institution's strategic planning process.

38. These highly strategic alliances can presently be found in just a few institutions in Africa. They need to be multiplied. Experience shows, moreover, that most university partnerships that have succeeded have been those with reliable and sustained donor support.¹² *How can the practice of university partnerships and cooperation agreements be reformed so as to become strategic tools for conscious institutional development? Is there a different role for international development partners (i.e., donors) in such a process?*

Summary Conclusion

39. Overall, much of tertiary education in Africa is recovering from the deep crisis that assailed it during the 1990s. Strengthened by this experience, it seeks to follow a more proactive and self-directed course in the future. A favorable wind seems to be rising to assist such efforts. The foundations for addressing the problem of access have been put in place. Promising experiments with tertiary financing are underway. Awareness of the need for corresponding changes in governance and management is growing. These are important and necessary steps for African tertiary education in the 21st century.

¹⁰ Gibbons, Michael. 1998. Higher Education Relevance in the 21st Century. Human Development Network, World Bank, Washington, D.C.

¹¹ Mkude, Daniel, Brian Cooksey and Lisbeth Levey. 2003. *Higher Education in Tanzania*. Partnership for Higher Education in Africa. Oxford: James Currey, p.33.

¹² Siphambe, H. 2005. Policy Dialogue on Regional Collaboration in Higher Education: Pilot Case – Southern Africa, Report to the World Bank, August.

40. But for tertiary education to contribute more effectively as a key driver for future national economic growth and social development, attention must now be focused on improving educational relevance; expanding graduate programs and retaining staff; providing strategic support to labor market development, trade strategies and investment priorities; and expanding capacities for research, particularly in applied technology. In light of the inevitable funding constraints, reform initiatives must be carefully chosen and should focus on areas that have the potential to generate the largest impact on a country's development. Each country will have to make its own choices, being mindful of increasing global interdependence and the need for collaboration to achieve economies of scale and improved relevance. Still, the darkest hour for Africa's higher education community seems to have passed, and the initial light of a new day appears to be illuminating the horizon.