

TITLE OF PAPER

REFORMING THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES: A PANAFRICAN PROJECT IN AN ERA OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN EDUCATION

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University education is expanding across Africa. It is currently viewed by political decision makers as the ultimate precondition for economic development. In line with this belief everyone of the fifty odds African countries is devoting tremendous effort into establishing on its territory, sometimes, more than one University to cater for the education of its youth. Nowadays, this exertion is reaching deadlock. If the growth in demand for higher education were to keep pace with demography it would engulf the entire GDP of any single African country. This is the financial background to the higher education crisis on the continent, stemming from the dearth of funding. To alleviate the ensuing sharp devaluation of higher education, the products of which are no longer enrolled in government jobs, especially, after the imposition of structural adjustment measures in the 1990s, African governments are now turning to international cooperation in higher education to fill in the gap not only in funding but also in quality education.

However, despite all this effort, development goals are still eluding the African countries. It is argued in this project that University education is not just about transferring knowledge and technology to individuals in a particular scientific field. But first and foremost about imparting values to the members of the middle class on whose shoulders lies the responsibility of developing the African continent. When the issue of values is overlooked University education simply churns out qualified individuals bearing an universal culture with no commitment to their native community. Viewed from this perspective, the present-day depletion of financial support to University education and impediment to international mobility of students and scholars could still be a welcome opportunity. Presumably, such circumstances would force upon African countries the alternative of pooling together their dwindling resources in order to establish pan-African universities.

How far did extroversion play a role in the current crisis of the national Universities?

What are the proper goals of University education in the African context of dependency?

To what extent only pan-African Universities can achieve these goals?

I An Identity Crisis: The National Universities in the Throes of Extroversion

The African national Universities like formal schooling in general have never been home-grown institutions¹. They bear the qualifier African only by convention. African here means that they are located on African soil. Actually, in all but name they still rely heavily on Europe for their survival. Not only did the European countries preside over their birth they also ensure their continued existence through funding². This dependency syndrome which is viewed in certain political quarters as the hallmark of universalism to which all Universities claim to aspire is hardly frowned upon by the majority of Africans. It is even believed in many African countries that the affiliation of national Universities to renowned European Universities guarantees the quality of training and the credibility of the degrees offered by them. But this reflex of servility evinced by the African decision makers is becoming embarrassing as Africa was not the only continent to have fallen, in the course of its history, an easy prey to European domination³. Elsewhere in the world, especially in America, the supervision of Europe in matters of education was never intended to be enduring⁴.

But the awareness that Europe holds the key of quality education has grown in pace with the degradation of tertiary education in most African countries⁵. This development is the logical outcome of the increase in demand of higher education by the African population, literate or not. Whether privately sponsored or holders of government scholarships African students are thronging the European Universities in search of knowledge. At home, they may not be able to achieve their dream, as year by year the amount of money allocated by each African government to higher education has depleted to insignificance. One has only to look at the sorry state of the University amphitheaters or halls of residence on the African campuses to be convinced by this fact. Buildings which were meant to host a reduced number of students are today accommodating a figure ten to twentyfold⁶. Arguably, the financing of higher education proved to be beyond the capability of any single African government. This was the background to the feeling of despondency sweeping across the University communities of the continent. As is known, this state of affair fueled in the 1980s and 1990s a spate of industrial actions leading to the shutting down for a whole academic year of certain campuses such as Dakar and Abomey-Calavi⁷. At this juncture, the international financial institutions stepped in to propose to the African governments a program of renovation of the national Universities.

However, the reform of tertiary education spearheaded in the African countries by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank did not go far enough to resolve the crisis of the national Universities. Even though many among them were given a facelift by the investment provided by them into infrastructure this effort was hardly sufficient to stem the tide of students' emigration to Europe. Actually, from barely a trickle in the 1980s, students' emigration swelled into a flood nowadays. There are two major reasons for this unhappy outcome.

A hidden agenda behind the financial support given to the national Universities by the international donors was the revamping of these institutions towards privatization and promotion of practical disciplines such as Engineering and computer sciences⁸. This shift of emphasis from theory to practice is indeed in line with the belief held by the pundits of the World Bank that University education is a luxury for the poverty stricken Third World countries⁹. According to them it consumes much needed financial resources which could be better used in developing primary and technical education which make readily available the trained workforce needed in agriculture and the industries¹⁰. These are the sectors of national education which deserve being overhauled for the sake of enhancing performance in these fields.

To achieve the goal of privatization many of the services formerly run by the state in the national Universities were recommended to relinquish their responsibility to private entrepreneurs with the view of making them cost effective. But from private service to private University there is only a small gap, easily bridged. In the 1990s a new breed of University managers cropped up in all the African countries. They were private businessmen who are willing to swim with the tide as they have sensed that investing into education may be financially rewarding. They took comfort from the fact that the African state has already given up its exclusive right of training and employing the workforce. But can University education ever be entrusted to private managers?

Their customers come mainly from the ranks of the youth who are more and more disillusioned by the situation prevailing in the national Universities. The suppression of state scholarships renders prohibitive University education to many students coming from poor families who could no longer afford a place in the national Universities. These latter were ready to join force with their wealthier colleagues who were now turning their sight towards the private Universities. These institutions were poised to cater for the expanding demand in training in the professional skills as suggested by the World Bank¹¹. The huge cost involved in the acquisition of these skills contributed further to streamlining the University curricula by making redundant so-called theoretical disciplines. Presumably, the private Universities were better equipped to embrace, wholeheartedly, the new dispensation of University education formulated by the protocol of Bologna in 1999¹². The bulkier national Universities did not easily take up the challenge of the LMD standard as this set of reforms is known in the Francophone Universities¹³.

By and large, the Protocol of Bologna aims at aligning the curricula of all the European Universities with the standard of the American University Education. This is the rationale behind the acronym LMD, that is Licence, Master, Doctorate, the three degrees crowning the stages of the process of learning undergone by an American student. Underlining the LMD reform in which the African national Universities were required to usher by 2012 are also a

range of reforms in the teaching methods. These new methods are geared towards constructivism, a theory which sets a great store by the active contribution of the learner in the process of learning¹⁴. But to be possible the dialogue between teacher and student implied by this pedagogy must entail some common values, an authoritative narrative, shared by both, as the basis of mutual understanding. While in America and in Europe it is easy to decipher the core principles behind this authoritative narrative the matter is not so in Africa where the course of history is not clearly delineated. Therefore, it is no surprise that the reforms encapsulated by the LMD system, contrary to the European Universities, ended up in disaster in the African national Universities. While they did not, substantially, improve the quality of training they failed woefully to meet the second goal spelled out in the Protocol of Bologne, that is, the mobility of teachers and students.

Long before COVID 19 drew across the Mediterranean the iron curtain of its quarantine the African students were already severely restrained in their attempt to emigrate to Europe. The sobering thought that the majority of the Africans who risk their lives today in the Mediterranean are University graduates adds a tragic hue to this gloomy picture. But the European tropism which is firmly rooted in the psyche of the African graduate needs some explaining. The African graduate is an individual, that is, a person estranged from his community. But he is an individual of a specific nature. Of course, any individual is imbued with the values of his community while keeping a reasonable distance from them for the sake of criticism. In traditional Africa, most culture heroes, such as the hunter-kings of the African legends, were individuals. They have been instrumental in causing the leap forward of the African societies. But, on the whole, the prevalent type of individual in the pre-colonial set-up was the individual from outside, that is, someone who had been ostracized from his home community owing to a heinous crime committed by him or because of his calling and who was afterwards welcomed by a neighboring community to resolve a crisis. Arguably, for any society to generate the second type of individual, the individual from within, it would have evolved a system of writing. However, even though the African graduate is literate, he does not meet the conditions of an individual from within simply because he is a bearer of an alien culture far distant from his own, due to the peculiar circumstances of his education.

Indeed the African graduate is the accomplished realization of the concept of the individual according to the gospel of capitalism. He is a cipher, a human being with no existential density, a mere exchangeable figure to be added up in the search of profit. His universal culture is simply the expression of the capitalistic values imbibed through his training. The best among the African graduates could be called upon at any time to play a role in the centre of the system while the overwhelming majority would fill the ranks of the reserved army of workers who keep salaries down both in the centre and the periphery of the capitalist world. To all indications, the African graduate is a slave, that is, etymologically, a disturbed person, someone who has been wrenched from his home community with which it had severed all links. That is why, like the slaves of yore, he feels no qualm in embarking on the risky voyage

across the Mediterranean, a seascape which today emulates the Atlantic ocean as the watery grave of Africans. What is unfolding before naked eyes is a re-enactment of the Middle Passage, simply because all the reforms of formal education undertaken on the continent through international cooperation in education achieved nothing but the entrenchment of the extroversion of the African people which began with the Atlantic slave trade.

So, it is not pointless to question the motivations behind all the reforms of education sponsored by the outside world on behalf of the African people. For instance, the drive to change the University curricula in favor of more practical disciplines sounds like the rehearsal of an old song. In the colonial days, the French colonial masters have already attempted to reform the colonial education in the colony of Dahomey towards more emphasis on the acquisition of technical skills¹⁵. However, their effort came to naught because they showed no sincerity in implementing the new curriculum. They either starved the program of much needed funding or they purposefully provided in the schools, established in its wake, a debased training. That is why, when it was later resumed in the early 1970s by the post-colonial regime of Dahomey, through what was known there as the Grossetête-Dossou-Yovo initiative, it was quickly dropped, out of pressure from the educated elite. It was revealed afterwards that the whole scheme smacked of opportunism. The French intended to use this opportunity to detain the emerging elite whose political activism was becoming disturbing in the countryside where they could be made subservient to the traditional chiefs appointed by them¹⁶. By so doing, they thought of delaying the onset of the nationalist struggle led by the urban educated elite. One would suspect that the motivations of their post-colonial successors were no different.

Admittedly, today's advocacy of practical disciplines sounds hollow when it is set against this backdrop of delaying tactics. No technique is neutral. It is always informed by a theory. To claim that theoretical disciplines are useless is to prevent the growth of an African consciousness. But knowledge without consciousness as the French used to say is the ruin of the soul. What is being concealed by such empty statements is the fact that the African school like the African nation-state was never meant to serve African interests. When the colonial masters decided to establish African schools they devised them in such a way that they would only train a few Africans to man the lowest ranks of the colonial administration¹⁷. This administration was intended to be in the service of an economy entirely geared towards the extraction of raw materials to the profit of the home industries of the European metropolises. In return, the colonial administration was tasked to channel into the colonies all the finished goods to which the Africans became addicted¹⁸.

The French education, inspired by the assimilation policy, was a brainwashing process which transformed the black boy into a white man¹⁹. Was he not taught since primary school that his ancestors were the Gaulois? The impending independence of the colonies forced upon the

colonial masters the necessity of expanding education beyond the primary and secondary levels. In this expectation, Fourah Bay College opened its doors in the 1930s. In the 1940s and 1950s Legon, Ibadan, Makerere and Dakar followed suit. By necessity, the first African Universities were pan-African. The number of African students was reduced and their catchment area covered many colonies of the same European metropolis. However, very soon this nucleus would spawn the national Universities as the demand of University education became overwhelming with the rise and consolidation of the African nation-states in the 1960s and 1970s. In the next section of this paper I will scrutinize the reasons why this expansion of University education failed to improve living conditions on the continent.

II University Education and the predicament of Africa: The Quest for the Organic Intellectual

Education in general, and, more specifically, University education performs two functions in any society. It prepares young men to adulthood by imparting to them the knowledge and skills they need to play their role in society. This function is paramount if society were to keep its identity and survive over time. The training of the manpower which is meant by the technical or practical aspect of education is based on science, an activity deemed to be concerned only by the universal as opposed to the particular or local values. It draws its principles from universal values shared by all men. Perhaps, the very word University finds its meaning in this quest for the universal. Viewed from this perspective, University education is, basically, conservative by nature. It provides the skills necessary to ensure the smooth running of a society. To use a French expression one would say that in this conservative role of transfer of knowledge and know-how University education is an *instruction*. It is debarred of all local values short of the universal. But if science is local value free it cannot also skip over the question: science for what? In trying to answer this question the local values which at first have been frowned upon come into conflict with universal values. This process, at times, leads to the devise of a handier paradigm to tackle the local problem encountered on the ground in the application of science. In this way universal and local values enrich each other and bring forward the scientific inquiry. The foregoing already foreshadows the second meaning of the word education which is quite revolutionary.

In its Latin etymology the word education is derived from the expression *ex ducere*, that is, to lead someone or a society from a state of backwardness to a more advanced state. To put it otherwise, one would say that education leads people from darkness to light or even enlightenment. This means that education implies a change of habit if not of society. It is a

process which marks the passage from nature to culture as it is spelled out locally in any part of the world. If we take our cue from this definition University education cannot just be in Africa an enterprise of *instruction*. Here, society needs to be urgently reconstituted on more authentic grounds. Perhaps, the war being waged against theory in the African national Universities serves no other purpose but to postpone, indefinitely, the awareness that the African society does not exist yet and must be rebuilt from scratch. It is an open secret that as the situation stands now only the Western World benefits, primarily, from University education in Africa. It makes available to the European industries a qualified workforce already speaking European languages even though their expensive training lies, mostly, on the shoulders of the African countries.

But in the guise of international cooperation in education the European countries have already secured some leverage over the running of the national Universities. Indeed, these poorly funded institutions are hardly capable of fitting out libraries or laboratories, let alone financing the regular publication of scientific journals on which depends the promotion of the academic staff. As a result, the European nations have a larger say not only in the contents of the curricula taught in these Universities they also determine the profile of the academic staff trained to dispense lectures. As they hold in their hands such essential levers it is no surprise that the former colonizers continue to dictate their will in the choice of those put at the helm of affairs in the national Universities. However, this external dependency, the result of inadequate financing by the African nation-states is just the extension of a far bigger internal dependency. The national Universities are so intertwined with political power that they are left no breathing space to undertake autonomous research. As is usually said, he who paid the piper calls the tune. The national Universities are dancing to the tune of politicians and external donors who have vitiated beyond repair their practices ranging from teaching to promotion. Elsewhere in the world, Universities have enjoyed franchises. These prescribed rights did not prevail though without a fight against the state. One can recall here the struggle that the French philosophers of the enlightenment had to sustain for the recognition by the French state of certain civil rights. As it is known, their intellectual acumen contributed in no small way to the American war of independence and to the French Revolution²⁰.

Given the proclivity of any organized state to stifle dissent it is not surprising that the Americans have fiercely resisted state involvement in University education. Not until the nineteenth century did they yield to the will of the Federal Government to establish state Universities²¹. The four Universities of the Ivy League, that is Harvard, William and Mary, Yale and Princeton, were primarily community based and founded in order to promote the values of a particular Christian denomination²². The African University dons who run the national Universities do not share in this cultural background and therefore could see nothing incongruous in the fact that in Africa state and University should become such complacent bedfellows. Indeed, whether we turn our sight to the pre-colonial or to the colonial period knowledge in Africa has always been a faithful handmaid of political power.

Where lies the difference in attitude is the degree to which the pre-colonial and the colonial elites, respectively, have been able to use their prominent position in society to amass wealth. In pre-colonial Africa, the standard of living of the traditional elite was almost undistinguishable from that of the ordinary citizens. Like anyone else they earn a living by tilling the land. The only advantage enjoyed by them stemmed from the fact that their resources were, perfunctorily, supplemented by gifts bestowed on them by grateful headmen or customers. For instance, this was the case of the Ifa priests among the Yoruba. It was even forbidden by custom that he exacts any fee on the delivery of his services apart from the proceeds of sacrifice²³.

However, as soon as the colonial era set in the situation changed overnight. Colonialism succeeded in firmly establishing itself on the continent by erasing whatever culture existed before it. While alleging that most African societies were a-cephalous the colonialists were fully aware that they had to conquer and destroy, systematically, the chiefdoms and kingdoms they had encountered on their way²⁴. However, as an afterthought, resulting from the administrative problems they met with, on the ground, they replaced them later by warrant chiefs and *chefs de canton*, the French version of local authority²⁵. Even though they were cronies of the colonial administration their authority was very limited and clearly circumscribed by the colonial power which assigned to them only such unpopular responsibilities as mobilizing manpower for forced labor, levying head tax and enrolling countrymen into the colonial armies. As could be expected the enforcement of such unpalatable measures dispelled any semblance of legitimacy that some of them (especially those chosen from the former royal lineages) might still enjoy²⁶. Moreover, any time traditional rulers fell short of the required standard the colonial administration did not shrink from humiliating them, sometimes, with public flogging to set an example.

The harsh treatments meted out to traditional rulers and the image they conveyed as puppets of colonial administration were not likely to endear them to the African masses who began to look down upon them and to think that the colonial system was actually built on a two tiered hierarchy: the anonymous mass of the Africans and the white man's world. Between the two worlds only education could be a bridge. It performs the miracle of changing a black man into white²⁷. This perception was reinforced, especially with the French, by the policy of the *indigenat* which gives extensive powers to any white administrative officer over his black subordinates²⁸. Such powers included public flogging of recalcitrant and jailing of disrespectful subjects. The enforcement of these powers led to many abuses strongly denounced and revealed to the metropolitan audience by the budding African press²⁹. Therefore, the dream of every African school boy is to replace one day the white administrative officer. This dream was summed up by a saying current in the colony of Dahomey. It runs as follows: "May the white man fall so that you may fall upon him." This

saying used to be a wish formulated in favor of an African recruit into an office of the colonial administration³⁰.

Indeed, as it dawned upon the African people that enrollment into the colonial school was synonymous with prestige and affluence they dropped their initial resistance to it. In their majority, they embraced it now wholeheartedly³¹. Even communities which, of late, have shunned colonial education either by sending children of their domestic slaves for enrollment or squarely by voting with their feet in order to place themselves under a rival colonial flag, have become zealous converts to colonial education³². These neophytes left no stone unturned to entice the colonial masters into building new schools in their towns and villages. But the colonial model propagated by these schools is hardly convenient for the African society. The white colonial officers who ventured to Africa were rewarded with fat salaries, exceptionally, as an inducement to stay put, given the fact that they were few and far between. Their extensive powers over the indigenous population also arose from this situation of emergency³³. Back home their standard of living is quite modest and any propensity towards abuse is, drastically, curtailed by countervailing powers including the civil society. Moreover, in the more organized societies of the metropolises the scale of the salaries is negotiated by trade unions which keep within reasonable bounds the rate between the lowest and the highest salaries in society, something inexistent in the colonies. Finally, in the metropolises, the religious elite, represented in the colonies by the Christian missionaries, who were not, necessarily, associated with political power and material affluence, offered already a counter model to the one conveyed by the colonial education.

The philosophy of replacement of the white man underpins the strong urge felt by the educated elite to exhibit wealth and power to the same degree as their white masters in utter disregard of the poor living conditions of their own people. The philosophy of replacement conceives of no small beginnings or incremental growth. The sudden mutation from blackness to whiteness performed by the colonial education suffers no gradual transition. This mindset is revealed by another African adage which showcased the amazement of a black servant on the first encounter with his white master's son. He exclaims, dumbfounded: "Is there any little one in this race?"³⁴ The most damaging effect of this attitude of mind is that the African society was denied the autonomous development of a middle class. Colonialism bequeathed to Africa a two tiered social hierarchy. The aspiration of the African student is to be at the top of society by all costs. It is not uncommon in Africa that a technical college opened to train the specialized workforce forming the middle class is overnight turned into a top engineering school by political decision.

A case in point is the College Polytechnique Universitaire (CPU) established by the Canadians on the campus of Abomey-Calavi in Benin in the 1970s. Today, this institution is churning out hundreds of jobless engineers. Likewise, in the Law Faculty of the same

University up till recently the long essay crowning the four years training of graduates used to bear ostensibly on the front cover the top administrative position they are entitled to in the civil service by virtue of their University education. Little did they know that the exorbitant demands they were making on the state would very soon invalidate its exclusive prerogative to recruit manpower. Much as the race to engross wealth and power, in which the educated elite is engaged, is the making of colonialism, nevertheless, it has got also some pre-colonial antecedents. Pre-colonial African societies were caste-based societies where conspicuous consumption served as a marker of categories and ranks. The only rider in this behavior is that the educated elite, of which many hailed from quite low-ranking families, usurped the right to exhibit wealth, as their pretensions were heightened by the disappearance of the pre-colonial political order.

It is known that the wealth accumulated from the Atlantic slave trade was profusely used by chiefs and kings to enlarge their following. The educated elite, especially, those among them who are playing politics, are not behaving today differently when they are seen buying political support in the countryside with the wealth coming from the cities. If there is any difference in their behavior it is the fact that the gap between city and countryside has widened in the wake of colonialism. Ibn Khaldun, the fourteenth century Arab historian of the Maghreb, has dwelled, extensively, on the unbridgeable gap between city and countryside on which he blamed the cyclical historical evolution of the societies of the Maghreb³⁵.

Ibn Khaldun who lived long before the Industrial Revolution which triggered a more focused analysis of human societies had very few conceptual tools to explain this phenomenon. He lay it at the door of the morality of the people of the Maghreb such as the propensity of city-dwellers to indulge in inordinate consumption which in the end led them to profligacy and moral degradation. This situation, according to him, would pave the way to sturdy invaders surging from the desert who would install a new dynasty after toppling from power the old one³⁶. Unfortunately, the newcomers were likely to fall into the same pitfall, and so forth and so on. *Mutatis mutandis*, the African kingdoms and chiefdoms in pre-colonial time did not fare better. They were faced with the same problem: how to move away from a caste-based society with its lust for immediate consumption and attain a sustained and linear development, a feature of class societies? It was to this ingrained instability that the colonial conquest put a stop but in its own favor. Colonialism settled the countryside by privatizing land which so far used to be collectively owned. This was not done to the advantage of the cities of Africa, but of the colonial metropolises. This intended disorder must be reversed before the emergence of any middle class in the post-colonial African nation-states.

The organic intellectual whom the African Universities are expected to train must be fully aware of these challenges which he is prepared to face theoretically and practically. The qualifier organic means that like a living organ he is bound to his society with bonds of

solidarity. He is an individual from within as the pre-colonial African societies, due to a lack of literacy, have not been able to generate. Perhaps, in concluding this section it is germane to sum up again these challenges. They could be spelled out in two points: To reverse the extroversion of the African societies and to settle the countryside. Solving the first point would mean that the Africans stop to grow what they do not eat and to eat what they do not grow. No continent can exist for ever as an appendage to another one. The second point tackles the issue of subsistence farming which is no longer able to feed the growing population of the continent. It goes without saying that raising this issue would entail reconsidering the status of land on the continent, a question which the post-colonial regimes have so far dodged. Training a workforce abreast with the challenges of development is beyond the capabilities of the national Universities.

III Reforming the African Universities: A Pan-African Project

The national Universities have woefully failed Africa. They so far proved incapable of lifting the continent from its predicament of under-development. The challenges outlined in the preceding section of this paper are so overwhelming that they require for their resolution a pan-African approach to University education. Admittedly, no single African nation-state can either reverse the extroversion of its economy or undertake the conversion of its agriculture, let alone lay the foundation of its industrialization without the collaboration of the other African nation-states. It is here that Kwame Nkrumah's statement according to which the independence of Ghana is meaningless without the independence of the whole continent assumes all its meaning.

But, on strictly academic grounds alone, the national Universities have outgrown their usefulness. Due to the poverty of most African nation-states the priority of which always lies elsewhere, not with University education, deemed to be a luxury, the majority of the national Universities are poorly equipped in terms of libraries and laboratories³⁷. As a result, the training provided by them is falling by the day below standard. The drift of the African youth to Europe in order to seek a better University education arises from the realization that their future is blighted by the national Universities³⁸. Moreover, these institutions which depend entirely on government funding are hampered in their duty of evaluation of teaching and research. In the early years of University education the African governments relied on the former colonial masters to carry out this assignment. They were the ones saddled with the duty of appointing in senior positions in the national Universities. As for the junior staff made up exclusively of African lecturers they have been left for years without promotion³⁹. It used to be said in those days that the African national Universities were Universities of lecturers. When these Universities won their complete autonomy from their European parent Universities it was from the ranks of the lecturers that the African government began to

appoint Vice-Chancellors, Principals and Deans of faculties, presumably, from the ranks of political partisans.

But the issue of the academic promotion of lecturers cannot be laid to rest. It cropped up again as the negotiation of the salary scale of senior staff was brought home to African governments. However, how to be objective in the assessment of lecturers in the polarized political context of Africa when each nation-state is a powder keg of ethnic divisions waiting to explode? The Anglophone Universities overcame this hurdle by the system of external examiners which keeps within reasonable bounds with the anonymity prescribed any subjectivism in assessment. As for the Francophone Universities they relinquished to a foreign body called CAMES (Conseil Africain et Malgache de l'Enseignement Supérieur) and which claims to be pan-African the mind-boggling business of evaluation of teaching and research and promotion of senior staff. But whether external examiners or CAMES the question of evaluation could hardly be said to have been solved. It is upstream of their final decision that the dice have been already loaded. It is at the stage of selection of the files to be submitted to CAMES and other evaluation bodies that the African states could tamper with the rules and regulations. Anyway, from one session to the other, the criteria of evaluation change with CAMES so as to comply with the whims of the member-states.

Depending on whom they want on board they raise or lower the stake. But publications are the centerpiece of this evaluation process in the light of the motto: 'Publish or perish'. As the so-called scientific journals are controlled by outside lobbies the African lecturer is powerless in this jungle of publications and can fall victim to malign pressure. So it is not always those who deserve promotion who are sent before the panel of CAMES but those who enjoy a strong backing of one of the coteries which have hijacked the national Universities in the Francophone countries. Indeed, despite its claim to be pan-African CAMES does not offer a single profile of academic excellence but has to juggle with a motley of profiles put forward by the member-states, each according to its circumstances. Nor does it propose the same curricula to be taught in the Universities coming under its tutelage. So, what is the purpose of this loose organization? Only the French who finance it can answer this question.

The point of the matter is that evaluation with CAMES appears to be haphazard and *à la tête du client* if not *à la carte* since University education in Africa has never been community based but individual centered, even though this individual is a half-baked capitalistic minded fellow, readily exportable to Europe, like raw materials. University education is, therefore, flawed by its casual attitude to morality. Perhaps, it is this moral deficiency which prompted the major Christian denominations to establish their own denominational Universities with branches in many countries of the sub-region of West-Africa as with the Catholics. By so doing, the religious leaders of these Christian denominations hope to instill morality back into University education. But as these institutions do not envisage any agenda of revolutionary

transformation of the African nation-states their effort remains timid. For instance, each one of them has endorsed the official curricula in effect in the country in which the branch is located, no matter their inadequacy. Christian morality is not enough if it does not take hold of the contextualized African subject.

The pan-African ideal of CAMES closely followed by the denominational Universities of West-Africa is therefore a misnomer. It is a far cry from the ideal propounded by the founding fathers of Africa. These latter were very well aware of the incontrovertible truth according to which only a middle class, steeped in the African values of solidarity and justice, and sharing the same outlook can shoulder the responsibility of developing the continent⁴⁰. It is this middle class which the Universities are tasked to build from scratch. It means that across the continent must be taught the same curricula and prevail a single profile of researcher. Apart from the chronic dearth of funding under which labor the national Universities due to their total dependency on the African states they are bereft of an atmosphere conducive to research. Indeed, the African nation-states in their support to the national Universities are not so much interested in research. What they need most are qualified professionals to man their civil service. Moreover, no community of researchers can thrive in the absence of certain prescribed rights such as liberty of opinion which the African nation-states are prone to repress. For all these reasons a properly reformed African University cannot be but pan-African.

But to achieve this lofty ideal the African people must rise to the challenge of communing in values intrinsic to them. Nevertheless, an examination of the African geo-political landscape, divided as it is into fifty-four nation-states, vying with one another for economic gains, and torn by ethnic conflicts, inclines the political observer of the African scene to conclude to the contrary. This landscape was given its moorings by the charter of AOU of 1963 with the clause proclaiming the intangibility of the borders, inherited from colonialism, as a guarantee for peace on the continent⁴¹. Such a welcome decision was embraced by the Western World where the European Universities have quickly adhered to the concept of the multiplicity of the African cultures, *les Afriques*, as proudly advertised by a French University. But this attitude of the European intellectuals is inspired above all by the idea of cultural relativism which permeates contemporary European thinking and, as a result, has become the hallmark of postmodernism⁴². Unfortunately, this mode of thought foreshortened their perspective on history both within and without. By renouncing the quest for truth in knowledge African studies, as taught in these Universities, amount to confining this branch of learning in a kind of cultural vicious circle which freezes the idea of Africa in a bygone age.

Meanwhile, little effort is made to point out the fact that capitalism, the leading political doctrine of the day, has been the result of a slow and long evolution going back to the Middle Age. In the vicious atmosphere of the Cold War the African nation-states were just urged to

imitate the Western World. Any attempt to draw attention to the specificity of Africa was considered with suspicion as challenging this political order and meddling with socialism, the opposite ideology⁴³. Yet, the formula of the nation-state, in its Jacobin version, which is being foisted upon the African people, did not spring fully armed like Juno from the thigh of Jupiter. It has got a long history which can be recapitulated in its French and German versions. Nobody can expect to achieve its successful graft into the African culture without re-enacting in mind this historical evolution.

Admittedly, beneath the bewildering variety of the African languages and ethnic groups, the African people share a common narrative. The African societies partake of some distinctive features which set them apart in the path of historical evolution. These features could be considered as the lineaments of a common heritage if not an authoritative narrative. It is not by accident that the whole continent, after being devastated by the tragic experience of the Atlantic slave trade, came under the plague of European rule. These two far-reaching events the effects of which are still felt across the continent are the appropriate springboards to raise the consciousness if not of the masses at least of the educated elite. To all intents and purposes the teaching of these subjects should be made compulsory in the training of the middle class. However, in order to fully play their role of yeast in the paste of Africa research into these topics must be made more objective. It serves no purpose, for instance, to downgrade research into the Atlantic slave trade into the cheap exercise of apportioning blame. To bear fruits this branch of research must break away from the number game and the Manichean worldview of colonialism in order to reach out to the comparative methods.

Africa is about the only continent where human historical evolution is stuck to the patriarchal stage. Even though kingdoms flourished everywhere on the continent they never succeeded in outstripping this stage. The African people experienced neither slavery nor feudality in their historical development. Admittedly, for capitalism to emerge as an over-arching economic system within which the means of production including manpower are divorced from man the passage by these two stages is mandatory⁴⁴. On the contrary, the African people did not achieve a stage where the grip of the extended families on land could be lessened. This is so because the vastness of the African landmass made land freely available and therefore defeated any attempt to force a section of the African population into working for other sections. Any time the African chiefdoms or kingdoms would toe this line they were likely to face resistance from the section so ill-treated who would vote with their feet and place themselves under another African ruler. This situation would put the African ruler in the unenviable position of courting his own people by all kinds of blood pact. In Africa, political authority was not expressed in terms of dominion over land but rather in terms of control of people. It is what is meant by the statement according to which the African kingdoms were loose alliances of extended families.

Such political formations were unable to evolve autonomously a class society. They were rather caste-based societies where ranks and social categories were clearly demarcated, externally, by access to precious items. Even though these societies provided the majority of slaves sold on the markets they were not slave based societies, a higher stage of development. Actually, slave based societies were no longer inclined to shed manpower but to keep it as a means of producing more goods for the market. It has been argued that domestic slavery, prevalent throughout Africa, was a mild form of slavery as compared to plantation slavery⁴⁵. Yet it is the very existence of this institution which would eventually usher in the sale of men. While the extended family sets a great store by the increase in number of its members its capability of absorbing manpower is very limited.

Unless and until a kind of blood relation is sealed with the ancestor a foreigner is in danger of being reduced to domestic slavery, a status tantamount to being a second class citizen. When the need arises some of the domestic slaves can be exchanged for the expensive items considered to be markers of social ranks. Caste-based societies were subjected to the law of immutability. They could reproduce themselves indefinitely⁴⁶. This is so because they, allegedly, lived on two time scales: the past and the present. In reality, they were one-dimensional societies. The recourse by them to the past served no other purpose than to maintain unchanged their social organization. As they have not yet discovered the dimension of the future, for them, the future assumes the meaning of a forthcoming yesterday. The cult of the ancestor was called upon only to give ideological support to a world constantly kept in diastase between being and power, that is, the present-day existence and the aspiration to model it according to the patterns laid down by the ancestor in a rosy past, their golden age⁴⁷.

This was the world discovered and conquered by the European colonialists. Afterwards, they reshaped it to their own advantage by first drawing the international boundaries and, secondly, by settling the African population in the countryside in the light of the theory of the three functions: the priest, the soldier, and the laborer⁴⁸. So far, the African people knew only about the functions of the priest and the soldier. Here, everybody was entitled to a piece of land to grow his own food. This means of production was valueless and owned collectively. The urgent task of research today is to retain this colonial improvement while turning it into the interest of the African people.

CONCLUSION

The African national Universities have become obsolete and are crying out today for reform. As their capacities of training the middle class have been, gradually, outstripped by the growing demand of higher education the African governments have turned to the outside world for funding and quality training. However, the IMF and World Bank led reform of national Universities in the 1980s and 1990s proved inefficient to reverse the trend towards decline. The streamlining of the curricula in favor of practical disciplines in the belief that University education in Africa suffers from its theoretical leaning carried echoes of an old colonial plot against Africa. Colonial education was never meant to liberate Africa but to train a subaltern workforce, entirely devoted to colonialism, with its lust for power and wealth. Despite the passage of time and the many reforms of education the colonial model continues to hold sway. It is argued in this paper that University education is not only about transferring knowledge and technology which always conveys a certain vision of the world but foremost about imparting values to the middle class. The crisis of identity of the national Universities which is concealed behind the war being waged against theory is another manifestation of the dominance of capitalism which holds these institutions to ransom in matters of funding and promotion of senior staff. Only pan-African Universities steeped in African values can foster an inward looking middle class, a precondition for the development of the African continent.

¹ See Paulin J. Hountondji, 1997, *Combats pour le sens, un itinéraire africain*, Cotonou, Les Editions du Flamboyant, pp.234-35

² Ibid.

³ See Boorstin J. Daniel, 1958, *The Americans. The Colonial Experience*, New York, Vintage Books, pp.1696-188

⁴ Idem.

⁵ See Unesco, Bureau régional de Dakar, *L'enseignement supérieur en Afrique: tendance et enjeux pour le XXI^e siècle*, 1993

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ See Bianchini, Pascal, 'L'Université de Dakar sous 'Ajustement: La Banque Mondiale face aux acteurs de la crise de l'enseignement supérieur au Sénégal dans les années quatre-vingt-dix' in Lebeau Yann and Ogunsanya Mobolaji, eds. Ibadan, 2000, pp.61-63.

⁸ See Vinokur Anne, 'La Banque Mondiale et les politiques d'ajustement scolaire dans les pays en voie de développement' in *Revue Tiers-Monde*, XXVII, 112, oct-dec. 1987, pp.918-934.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ See Niane, Boubacar "Permissivité d'un espace de formation: le cas de l'Université de Dakar" in Lebeau Yann and Ogunsanya Mobolaji, eds, 2000, pp.303-305.

¹² See WWW.yahoo.fr.

¹³ Ibid.

- ¹⁴ See Bain, Ken, 2011, *Les secrets des meilleurs professeurs*, traduit de l'Anglais par Bernard Vincent, Paris, Nouveaux Horizons.
- ¹⁵ See J. Capelle, 1990, *L'éducation en Afrique Noire à la veille des indépendances*, Paris, Karthala-ACCT, pp.271-298.
- ¹⁶ See J.O de l'AOF, no.1024, Supplément du 10 mai 1924.
- ¹⁷ See Abdou Moumouni, 1967, *L'éducation en Afrique*, Paris, Editions Maspero
- ¹⁸ See Jean Suret-Canale, 1964, *Afrique Noire, vol.II. L'ère coloniale, 1900-1945*, Paris, Editions Sociales.
- ¹⁹ René Lémé, 1906, *L'enseignement en AOF; Exposition coloniale de Marseille* (Editions Crété)
- ²⁰ See Thomson David, 1957, *Europe since Napoleon*, Second edition, London, Longman, pp.3-7.
- ²¹ See Boorstin J.Daniel, 1958, p.179-184.
- ²² Ibidem
- ²³ On Ifa priests see Maupoil, Bernard, 1981, *La géomancie à l'ancienne Côte des Esclaves*, Paris, Institut d'Ethnologie
- ²⁴ See Mair, Lucy, 1977, *African Kingdoms*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press
- ²⁵ See Hargreaves D. John, 1969, *France and West Africa*, London, Macmillan, pp.210-216.
- ²⁶ Ibid
- ²⁷ See Cheik Hamidou Kane, 1961, *L'aventure ambiguë*, Paris, Julliard, p.44.
- ²⁸ On Indigenat see Hargreaves D. John, 1969, pp.220-24.
- ²⁹ See ANS, 8G 59-23, de Coppet au Gov.-Gen no.331 APA de 26 mars 1934. ANS 8G 60-23, Brevié à Kuassi, ca. mai 1934.
- ³⁰ The saying in Fongbe is rendered as follows: "yovo na jayi bo a na jéjiton"
- ³¹ See Aguessy, Honorat, 1979, p.13 quoting the Guide du Dahomey, no.20 of 23 April 1921: "Les indigènes connaissent le prix de la science qui donna le droit de faire la loi à ses semblables... Les petits Dahoméens ont compris l'utilité de l'instruction et savent qu'elle constitue une armure puissante dans la lutte pour l'existence, que c'est faute d'elle que la race noire est en retard, que la science précieuse révèle l'homme."
- ³² See Assaba, Claude and Amoussou, Léonard in Aguessy, Honorat, 1979, *Implantation de l'école dans la société béninoise*, Cahiers de la production scientifique des étudiants en sociologie et anthropologie, FLASH, UNB, pp.16-21 et pp.26-27.
- ³³ See Hargreaves D. John, 1969, pp.210-229.
- ³⁴ Here is the rendition of this adage in Fongbe: "Fonnu mon ganton si vi: kpeviton dé wè a?"
- ³⁵ See Lacoste, Yves, 1985, pp.152-153.
- ³⁶ Ibid
- ³⁷ See Vinokur, Anne, op.cit., pp.918-934.
- ³⁸ See Kabou, Axelle, 1991, *Et si l'Afrique refusait le développement?* Paris, Edition de l'Harmattan
- ³⁹ See Ndiaye, Falilou, op.cit., p.169.
- ⁴⁰ See Kwame Nkrumah, Discours d'ouverture du Premier Ministre du Ghana à la conférence des peuples africains, 8 décembre 1958 in Lazar V. Ki-Zerbo et Jean-Jacques N. Sène, 2016, *L'idéal panafricain contemporain*, Dakar, CODESRIA, pp.19-24.
- ⁴¹ See Esedebe, P. Olisanwuche, 1994, *Pan-Africanism*, second edition, Washington, Howard University Press, p.196.
- ⁴² See Paul Valéry's statement: 'Civilisations nous savons désormais que nous sommes mortelles'
- ⁴³ See Kwame Nkrumah, 1970, *Class Struggle in Africa*, London, Panaf Books Ltd, p.59.
- ⁴⁴ See Anderson, Perry, 1977, *Les passages de l'antiquité au féodalisme*, Paris, Maspero, pp.115-153.
- ⁴⁵ See Finley, M.I., 'A Peculiar Institution?', in *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 July 1976.
- ⁴⁶ See Melotti, Umberto, 1977, *Marx and the Third World*, London, The Macmillan Press, p.1 scientifique01-104.
- ⁴⁷ See Kosselek, R., 1990, *Le futur passé. Contribution à la sémantique des temps historiques*, Paris, ed.de la MSH
- ⁴⁸ See Dumézil, Georges, 1968, *Mythe et Epopées I: L'idéologie des trois fonctions dans les épopées des peuples indo-européens*, Paris: N.R.F./Gallimard.

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