

Whither the African University?

Bekele Gutema¹

Abstract

Universities that came into being largely in the second-half of the 20th century, to meet the demands of that time have now evolved significantly and are asking themselves about what they are and what they should be. They could not disentangle themselves from their history. They could not take initiatives to embark on the path of independence in terms of curricula and research agenda. The idea of university reform which is being undertaken for over a decade and a half now, is largely not an African initiative. It is an initiative of the World Bank and its stakeholders. Another aspect of that agenda is the plan to educate an overwhelming number of university students in the fields of science and technology. While the plan in favor of science and technology may not be bad in and of itself, could it address society's problems holistically? If the new plan neglects the humanities and the social sciences, is this plan not forgetting the point that the humanities help to define the purpose of science and technology? Did concerned bodies, i. e. universities, professors and the public at large debate on this issue and set such an agenda or is it merely a political agenda driven by narrow political and economic interests that see knowledge as commodity and nothing more? Does the reform take into account internationalization? Are universities trying to carry out reform in such a way that internationalization is fostered or are they carrying out the reform only with the local situation under focus? What could be the consequences of such a top-down plan? If the African university wants to be a proper university working for the empowerment of the African people, it must have independence in setting its priorities through debates that involve all who are concerned. It should also have the academic freedom to pursue knowledge and the autonomy requisite to plan its own development in terms of admission, curricular development, and research priorities.

Keywords: *Addis Ababa University, academic freedom and autonomy, internationalization of curricula, university reform*

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Addis Ababa University

Introduction

The African situation is mind boggling, since Africa faces a lot of problems and challenges. Despite the challenges there is also a sense of anger and determination among many Africans to overcome the challenges. Africa is neither poor nor powerless. The problem that is hindering Africa from using her wealth and exercising her power among other things lies in the inability to use knowledge that is available locally and internationally in an appropriate manner. This and the inability to evolve an awareness requisite to become a historical subject probably are the problems that Africa needs to overcome before she takes her destiny into her own hands. The lack of subjectivity as it was understood by the Hegelian and neo-Marxist traditions of Habermas and critical theory in general is a crucial point in addressing Africa's problems. This in other words is the issue of the agency that can be entrusted with taking responsibility for Africa's future and that has to do with subjectivity. The lack of will and determination are the factors that could explain Africa's enigma if she is neither poor nor powerless.

The African university can play an important role in contributing to overcoming these problems if it is allowed to become university, properly so called. Both in terms of cultivating the spirit and knowledge necessary for the development of subjectivity and practical knowledge necessary for development, the African university needs to play an important role.

In this article I will try to explore the problems hindering the African university to play its historic mission. I will briefly discuss the origin and growth of the African university and then the situation in which "university reforms" have been taking place for close to two decades. I will then try to show how the problems associated with academic freedom and autonomy and the production of knowledge are closely related and that so long as the issues of academic freedom and autonomy are not addressed it is not possible to expect the African university to properly play its role and help its society overcome Africa's problems and function on an equal footing with universities elsewhere. The present situation requires the internationalization of higher education, owing to the interdependence that is evolving due to globalization. Internationalization is done in African universities in an ad-hoc and haphazard way. Overcoming this is indispensable if the African university is to play a meaningful role in society.

Origin and Growth of the African University

African universities with the exception of universities in Northern Africa and the Republic of South Africa are just above half a century old. In a few cases they were established just before the end of colonialism. At that juncture the purpose of their establishment was also clear. Universities like the universities of Nairobi, Makerere, Ibadan and a few more were established to train personnel that could be supportive in running the colonial machinery. What started in this form around the 1950s and early 1960s involved the establishment of many more universities in a decade's time.

Their coming into being at this juncture, i. e. their history explains their essence. One of the problems that African universities face is that they could not disentangle themselves from their history. As I argued elsewhere (Gutema 2013), the fact that African universities were not independent institutions that came into being to tackle real problems of the African peoples is an issue that is still following them like a shadow preventing them from self-assertiveness and independence. But this was further compounded by the fact that post colonial African governments that inherited them or that established them anew were not ready to fulfill the conditions that could enable them to function independently.

Such universities were left to their own fate in many ways. Academically they were not in a position to map out a new direction in terms of designing curricula and new and relevant research agenda. This is an indication of the point that African universities epistemologically remained subservient to the hegemony of the West. Administratively the powers that be were not ready to give them the requisite autonomy to administer themselves as they thought fit. Academically they were forced to gnaw on bones left by the metropolitan universities. This is what Hountondji calls extraversion (Hountondji 2002). Administratively they were left to satisfy themselves from crumbs thrown to them from local as well as foreign sources. In what concerns autonomy they were forced to remain appendages of their respective countries' bureaucracy.

It was in a situation which more or less looked like this that African universities were forced to work for the first three to four decades of their existence. In those years they achieved modest results in terms of the Africanization of their staff, educating persons that would be leaders and

functionaries in the local bureaucracy and the like. Apart from these minimal achievements, in terms of producing new knowledge and relevance or in terms of becoming the public voice that the African masses require, their performance is lamentably dismal.

University Reforms

An important landmark in the history of African universities is the reform of higher education initiated in the 1990s. These reforms pledged to bring efficiency to universities. They came up with an idea that the university is a private good; knowledge is a commodity that deserves to be sold to those who can buy. These reforms undermined some fields in the social sciences and humanities that did not have immediate returns like some fields of knowledge and the professions in engineering, technology, computer science, etc.

Before proceeding with the idea of university reform I would like, at this point, to briefly discuss the idea of a university. The two well-known models of the university are Wilhelm von Humboldt's and Henry Newman's idea of the university. A brief discussion of the two ideas will give us the perspective under which we can understand the university and its tasks.

Humboldt's idea of a university emphasizes combining teaching with research with the aim of sharing the outcome of research to students in the process of teaching. Such a university is the most appropriate, according to Humboldt, for the search of 'impartial truth'. Combining teaching with research and other two core ideas, namely academic freedom and academic self-governance constituted as it were the three principles up on which the idea of a university ought to be based (Anderson 2009).

Such a university has the main task of advancing knowledge through original research. Original and critical research should constitute one of the main tasks of the university. The university should not just be an institution for the teaching of skills or transmitting existing knowledge. Objective and disinterested research in the pursuit of truth has to be the primary task. Students are required to have a definite role in this process. The university should be constituted by a community of scholars where the cardinal task is the pursuit of truth. The other two principles are vital for the pursuit of such a goal. Academic freedom makes it possible to pursue knowledge without

hindrance. Intellectual (academic) freedom supported by autonomy makes this possible. It could constitute an ideal ground for not only the flourishing of the university but also for the proliferation of different types of disciplines within the university.

The ideas of objective and disinterested search for truth need to be seen critically. In matters of a search for truth is there a neutral ground? Is there a view from nowhere? In view of the fact that the search for truth happens from a position anchored in social and political backgrounds, the notion of an objective and disinterested truth requires a closer examination. It is having this in mind that Horkheimer expressed the view that nearly all traditional theories have been serving the ideological purpose of justifying the status quo despite claims to objectivity and neutrality (Horkheimer 1992). Humboldt's idea of a university may be aiming at an ideal university, but it cannot also be denied that it aims at a university for the elite.

Henry Newman's model is the other important idea of the university. Newman put emphasis on a liberal exposure to the universe of knowledge. It is the model of a university aiming at the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. He said,

I consider, then, that I am chargeable with no paradox when I speak of knowledge which is its own end, when I call it liberal knowledge, or a gentleman's knowledge, when I educate for it, and make it the scope of a university. And still am I incurring such a charge, when I make this question consist, not in knowledge in a vague and ordinary sense, but in that knowledge which I have especially called philosophy or in an extended sense of the word, science; for whatever claims has to be considered as a good, there it has a higher degree when it is viewed not vaguely, not popularly, but precisely and transcendently as philosophy. Knowledge, I say, is then especially liberal, or sufficient for itself, apart from every external and ulterior object, when and so far it is philosophical, ... (Newman 1907:100).

Newman, unlike Humboldt did not want to put emphasis on combining teaching with research. Individuals' potentials are different. Some have potentials for teaching, while others can excel in research, hence the need to keep the two separate. It is better if research is carried out outside of

universities. The university has to be understood as a place of universal education. It is also important to make distinction between education and training. The university has to be a place for the pursuit of broad liberal education. An education aiming at cultivating intellectual virtues is the kind of education that Newman had in mind. Maturity of judgment and intellectual strength must be what university education has to try to instill in its graduates.

These constitute two very important ideas on the university. It is not clear which one of the ideas were taken into account when the African universities were established. It can be argued that apart from a general rhetoric about a university's importance no one probably tried to articulate the kind of university that Africa needs. The kind of guiding principles and philosophy that a university education ought to follow was not properly discussed and articulated when these universities began, although there are attempts now to rethink what an African university should look like.

In trying to understand this issue, we need to take into account the times and cultural contexts of both Humboldt and Newman. There is no doubt that there are a lot of things that we can learn from their ideas of the university. However, it won't be reasonable to assume that an African university would totally function on principles derived from ideas of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Even if the idea of a university may be anchored around the notions of academic freedom and autonomy, we also have to take into account the concrete tasks that an African university has to tackle. A university in postcolonial Africa within the context of immense cultural diversity and complex socio-economic problems needs to take into account these problems, when it sets its role and mission. It is only when it takes this into account that it can meet its ethical responsibilities. If it is not able to establish its ethical responsibilities based on its situation such a university will put its very *raison d'être* in question. Following W. E. Du Bois' (1975) claims, that all universities are embedded in particular cultural contexts, we can say that African universities are embedded in specific African cultural contexts. It is by virtue of this fact that they get the ethical responsibility for the community that hosts them (Verharen 2012). Like many other universities, African universities are hosted and supported by their communities. Such universities definitely have an ethical responsibility for such a community. One of the purposes why communities

host and support universities is the conviction that universities are able to deliver the knowledge required to solve the problems of the concerned communities.

If it may not be possible and necessary to copy either Humboldt's or Newman's ideas as they are, it is necessary to selectively learn from the ideas of both. The idea of the unity between teaching and research is an important idea for many universities. To meet the ethical responsibilities to their communities, universities need to combine their teaching with research that aims at solving the concrete problems of their societies. We can therefore take this idea and the ideas of academic freedom and autonomy from Humboldt.

Newman's insistence on liberal education, particularly when he says, "knowledge, I say, is then specially liberal, or sufficient for itself, apart from every external and ulterior object, when and so far it is philosophical..." emphasizes the need not only to train for a career but have educated persons with the requisite maturity of judgment, decency and wisdom. If we try to work out the missions of our universities in a pragmatic manner by taking ideas from pioneering thinkers like Humboldt, Newman and others and also taking into account our specific cultural contexts that will enable the universities to meet their ethical responsibilities, then we can have a proper African university.

Returning to the idea of university reform, we can say that the idea of reform was initiated by external forces to the university, mainly the World Bank. During the last several years of the 20th century, there was a plan to reduce African universities to virtually vocational schools. The World Bank tried to implement this by using African governments. The change of heart on the part of the World Bank in this regard came around the year 2000. It was realized that reducing universities to vocational schools was not realistic. Without abandoning the idea of reform, it aimed at promoting the fields of engineering, technology, the natural sciences, while the fields of the humanities and the social sciences were disadvantaged.

The other aspect of the reform was the commodification of knowledge. Taking a departure from the idea of the university as stipulated by Humboldt, the discourse of the last decades of the 20th century was to take the university a market place. The university has to be thought of as any other enterprise and the guiding principle under which a university has to

operate has to depend on its profitability. It is realizing this that Issa Shivji said,

Knowledge production must be privatized and knowledge products must be commoditized... Train entrepreneurs who can sell mandazi more profitably... Informatics and the virtual are real and your real world is supernatural. No doubt our universities are transforming and being transformed—from sites of knowledge production to sites of hotel construction; from building lecture halls to pre-fabricating shopping malls. From the culture of collegiality, which was the hallmark of the university, we are now in the thick of corporate cultures (2005: 3)

It may be helpful to understand these reforms in the spirit of the strengthening of neo-liberal (new right ideology) of the Thatcher years in the United Kingdom. The genesis of the reforms can be traced back to the Thatcher years when government intervention in universities took place largely with the aim of achieving efficiency and meeting the interests of so-called non-academic stakeholders. The Thatcher government through successive phases undertook a reform of higher education that enabled undermining the classical idea of the university. Among the changes introduced initially were steps that required universities to make efforts to meet the needs of non-academic stakeholders. While the fields of engineering and technology remained largely unaffected, the reduction of budget undermined the tasks of universities generally and those of the humanities, particularly (Martin Trow 1993, Tom Owen 1980).

This was the prelude to what will come later on. Government intervention in the form of managerial undertaking moved to the next phase in the 1980s during the heydays of Thatcher's premiership. The measures introduced during this phase underlined that in addition to striving to meet the needs of the wider society, universities should also try to function as efficiently as possible. For this they should apply management techniques in running universities. This created a situation for the introduction of terminologies and techniques practiced in the corporate world. Classically universities were run by presidents or vice-chancellors. With these changes they have been replaced by chief-executives, terms and practices borrowed from the corporate world. Intervention by governments and as a result introduction of new ways of managing universities and related factors

totally changed the discourse in universities. The discourse in universities took a departure from academic discourse and started to look like discourses in the corporate world (Mazrui 2003).

In the case of the UK, it was by targeting institutions that represented and promoted the interests of the professions like engineering that it was possible to undermine university autonomy. One of the things that can be mentioned as an example here is how the Thatcher government replaced the so-called University Grants Committee (UGC) by the University Funding Council (UFC). While the UGC largely consisted of professors who tried to promote higher education among political circles, the UFC consisted of people from outside the profession, i. e. business people, people from industry, etc. The focus of the UFC was efficiency and the establishment of the principles of the market. This undermined the independence of universities.

The reform of universities that started during the 1990s hence had its genesis in this phenomenon that was the epitome of the ideology of the “new right”. Orientation towards profit and establishing the principles of the market does not tally with the classical model of the university. More importantly, the philosophy that higher education is a private, rather than a public good is a philosophy that cannot be defended. Higher education may not be a public good in the same way that lighthouses, traffic lights, etc. are public goods. However, it cannot be denied that the product of higher education is a public good when viewed from the perspective of its products. The knowledge that universities produce is indispensable in solving society’s problems. Reflecting on this issue D. Smith wrote,

I believe the origins of the obviously fallacious application of this distinction [public vs. private] good to higher education can be found in a confusion concerning exactly what the good is that is at stake in higher education, and to whom it accrues. The university is not a public good in relation to the individual students who are educated within it. However, it might be considered a public good in relation to the knowledge and development, in general, to which it contributes (Smith 2005:172-173).

My university, the Addis Ababa University has been in the rhetoric of reform for more than about a decade and a half. Over these years, at least four different sets of reforms have been attempted on paper. The one that

started in the 1990s mainly focused on efficiency, the reform of some programs and the expansion of the graduate program. Apart from a really minimal success in terms of the expansion of graduate studies, that reform attained close to none in terms of efficiency.

What looked like a more serious attempt at reform started immediately after the turn of the century. What aimed at bringing efficiency, the revision of curricula and the expansion of the graduate program did not go beyond preparing certain documents that could guide the reform. The delay in the reforms and the turn of events made that effort and the documents superfluous. I say this because it was in the midst of this that the documents were shelved and another jargon took over. This is what was known as the “strategic planning.” Earlier when the reform was being planned and undertaken there weren’t even references to the strategic plan. But it was around 2005 that this idea became the top agenda in the University². I don’t think that this is an initiative of the University, because this was the time when all universities in Ethiopia had no other agenda than the strategic plan. I still have vivid memories of the meetings conducted, the workshops held and the documents produced in this regard, since I had the chance to participate in some of these activities as the chair of the Department of Philosophy at that time.

But here again the turn of events is surprising. Because the University all of a sudden stopped the idea of the strategic plan and shifted to another ‘reform agenda’. This phenomenon that began in 2008 is known as the Business Process Re-engineering (BPR). This was a time when the Ethiopian Government was planning to reform the entire bureaucracy through the BPR. This agenda made no exceptions and hence universities, ministries, enterprises and virtually every public institution were experimenting with this idea.

As it was conceived by its American authors the BPR was thought as an instrument of efficiency for companies, enterprises and largely the

² The ideas dealing with the reform of Addis Ababa University are drawn from different documents of Addis Ababa University issued at different times by different offices of the University, committees entrusted with carrying out the reform and my personal observations. The following are the main documents: Reorganization of Structural and Governance System of the University, Addis Ababa December 2011, Status Report Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) Implementation, July 2011, Higher Education Proclamation, No. 605/2009, The Senate Legislation of Addis Ababa University (2007), Addis Ababa University Strategic Plan (2000-2004 Ethiopian Calendar), Report on BPR Teams on Core and Support Work Process (Teaching, Learning, Research, etc.), Proposal for Autonomous Governance Structure of Addis Ababa University. (July 2011), Revised Senate Legislation 2012, Addis Ababa University Organizational Chart, 2011..

private sector. It is said that it achieved results. As a business management strategy it focused on the analysis and design of workflows and processes within an organization. Its aim is improving customer service, reduce operational costs and help compete on a global scale for companies (Hammer, M. and Champy, J. A.: 1993; Johansson, Henry, J. et al.: 1993). . It is the merit of choosing such a process meant for making companies efficient to manage universities that really needs to be questioned.

For my university, its achievements even before it is fully implemented are disappointing. Working out the reform took close to three years. I can imagine that it has consumed huge resources, a lot of time and energy. In the last instance its achievements are the over bureaucratization of the University, entrenching the bureaucracy and pushing a bad situation into worse in the sense that these activities virtually crippled many activities of the University. What I call the over bureaucratization of the University can be seen in how we ended up having four vice presidents instead of the former two and up to ten or more directors under each of these vice presidents, including also ten directors in the office of the president. At faculty level what used to be efficiently managed by a dean involved a director above the dean and a host of other committees with overlapping functions both at faculty and department levels. Is it not puzzling that small departments with only ten faculty members in some faculties had up to six different committees again with overlapping duties and responsibilities? It is questionable that this is the BPR, because the BPR is about efficiency and competitiveness and how can we talk of efficiency when we multiply the bureaucracy in a university?

Here I would like to make two observations. The first one is how the University that started reform with the idea of efficiency failed to understand that one of the hallmarks of efficiency is to shorten the process of work and also reducing the number of tasks and people doing the same kind of work. I don't see the rationale in appointing a director for a faculty while the dean could run the faculty. Such anomalies are innumerable.

My second observation is that each one of these reforms was initiated not by the university and its administration. Rather it is a top-down undertaking initiated by the Ministry of Education. This is a paradox for a university. A university should normally be the store house of knowledge or ideas. Universities should be at the forefront of activities that affect them

and their societies. Only a university that has abdicated its mission will accept the idea of reform as directed by a bureaucracy and then goes out of its way to unnecessarily over bureaucratize itself. But this could be seen as the lingering of the idea that originally brought the university into existence. The fact that university leaderships accept these ideas readily without critically scrutinizing them is a testimony to their dependence and that they are not showing any efforts to be independent. It shows how we have run short of ideas or worse still we did not have ideas of how to manage a university, while we are teaching management to our students and many of the managers in the different branches of both the public and the private sectors had at least their undergraduate education at Addis Ababa University.

The over bureaucratized structure was not allowed to continue for a long time. The government as usual removed the president and the vice presidents that were at the time preoccupied with implementing the over bureaucratized structure and appointed a new president as an indication of the fact that the university does not have autonomy. What makes the task of the university painful also is this change where a new president starts all over again. In such a situation the university cannot plan its activities. The government mostly appoints persons who are ready to accept orders rather than planning for themselves. Academic freedom, autonomy and a university charter that could guarantee the university's independence seem to have been shelved for some time to come. The attempt to secure a charter for the Addis Ababa University, which was at the top of the University reform agenda around 2000, has never been raised for over a decade now. Instead we got a proclamation of 2009 which gave all powers to the president and undermined the authority of the University Senate by making it answerable to the president. Hence we have a university where presidents are appointed by bodies external to the university. The appointed presidents feel that they are illegitimate in front of students and the academic staff. This undermines their authority and forces them to resort to run the university through top-down management rather than a collegial, consensual leadership emanating from legitimacy and deliberation. In the absence of a proper and legitimate leadership universities survive willy-nilly by delivering the minimum.

Academic Freedom and Autonomy

By academic freedom is meant the right professors and researchers have to study their fields of knowledge and express their views without fear. They should neither be restrained nor dismissed from their duties as a result of their views. Such a right assumes that an open and a free inquiry is indispensable to the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of education and research. Moreover academic freedom assumes that tenure in teaching and research depends basically on the competence of the professor and her/his acceptance of the standards of professional integrity rather than other factors such as political affiliation, ideological commitment and similar extraneous factors. According to the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration of 1999 academic freedom is, “the freedom of members of the academic community, individually or collectively, in the pursuit, development and transmission of knowledge, through research, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation, teaching, lecturing and writing” (Article 53).

Amy Gutman sheds further light on the idea in the following way,

The core of academic freedom is the freedom of scholars to assess existing theories, established institutions, and widely held beliefs according to the canons of truth adopted by their academic disciplines, without fear of sanction by anyone if they arrive at unpopular conclusions. Academic freedom allows scholars to follow their autonomous judgment wherever it leads them, provided that they remain within the bounds of scholarly standards of inquiry (2002: 175).

Autonomy on the other hand refers to the right to self – government. Universities need to have the power that enables them to appoint academic staff freely without interference from outside. This power covers a range of other key activities of universities including admission of students, determining what and how it should be taught, establishing and implementing their own standards, determine their priorities and also determining their strategy of future development.

The university must be founded on the twin principles of academic freedom and autonomy in order to be university properly so called. A

university in which these principles are not upheld cannot be in a position to optimally pursue its goals and fulfill its mission. The absence of these principles negatively affects the free pursuit of knowledge and dissemination of ideas. It renders impossible the institutional independence requisite for the pursuit of duties for which universities are meant. It opens the door for nepotism and favoritism as we can see in many of our universities, where presidents recruit faculty members without following the proper procedures and then appointing them to positions of responsibility like deanship, directorship, etc.

In many African countries particularly the last few years have seen an increase in the number of universities significantly. In Ethiopia the number of universities has jumped from just a few to over thirty in a time of a decade and a half. While the effort, will and determination to increase the number of universities are appreciable, it is clear that such a massive expansion has its own problems and drawbacks. The first problem is that it is in the absence of properly qualified faculty that new universities admit students and start teaching. The new universities rely largely on locally available first and second degree holders without meaningful experience in tertiary education. In such a situation there is no doubt that the quality of education could be undermined.

The other problem associated with this is the governments' attempt to have uniform curricula aka harmonized curriculum for all public universities. This is probably motivated by two factors. The first one is the lack of experience of faculty working in the new universities in designing curricula. Hence the curriculum of one or two older universities will be taken; faculty from these universities will be put in a workshop and told to come up with a curriculum that should work across the country. This has its limitations and shows also the universities' inability to determine what to teach. While the absence of properly qualified faculty is a pretext, it is clear though that the second reason why the government dictates the preparation of the curricula in this way is to determine what is taught. It is a way of controlling the kind of material students could have access to. It indicates how the government thinks of education. It could be seen as the hallmark of a government obsessed with controlling everything. It indicates that entities external to the university, the Ministry of Education in the case of Ethiopia has authority over academic policy and matters. A uniform university

curriculum in countries like Ethiopia prevents many universities from creatively studying and handling environmental, cultural and other issues related to their environment. Ethiopia's diversity is geographical, biological (biodiversity) and cultural. Every university probably needs a curriculum largely tailored to its geographic, environmental and cultural uniqueness, without of course undermining the overarching elements.

In raising these issues it is important to rethink the purpose of education. The purpose of education is to make people knowledgeable to function better in their environments. Through the appropriation of knowledge, skills and values education should enable people to think critically about what they are and what they are supposed to do. It should make them better people not only in terms of doing certain things efficiently but also enabling sustainability that takes care of the earth and generally the environment that sustains us. It should aim at creating an enlightened citizenry. It should in other words aim at sustainable living. It should be an education that does not think only in terms of technologically dominating nature. Rather it should be an education that enables people to think ecologically or environmentally to understand the interconnectedness of humans and nature in its totality. The question should be what type of education can render possible the flourishing of human communities and the natural systems.

The issue of the relevance of education is a perennial problem for education and curriculum. We largely undermine relevance when we focus on curricula that are copied from the developed countries of the North. In designing our curriculum we should not forget that there is a valuable indigenous knowledge that can answer many questions. Education's higher aim should not be imitating what others have done. We have to look around and see that people whom we call illiterate and who cannot read and write have been living sustainably in their environments. I think that we can draw a lot of lessons from such people, their cultures and belief systems. There is a valuable store of knowledge in how they live sustainably in their environment.

The obvious place where university autonomy is violated is in the appointment of university authorities. University presidents are appointed by governments without the involvement of faculty members in any meaningful way. In many cases such appointments function counter to even

existing regulations. Here also my university supplies a typical example of how university presidents are appointed. In the last twenty years alone the government appointed six presidents to run Addis Ababa University. These appointments happened without involving faculty members, students and other concerned people with the exception of one or two presidents at the beginning. They are political appointments where the appointees find it hard to find qualified and experienced persons who want to work with them. Some of them had to bring in a lot of people from outside the university in a situation where people in the university feel marginalized and do not want to work with them. F. Egbokhare writes,

Government's interference with the appointment of vice-chancellors is motivated by political expediency and the need to exercise control over the academic community. Vice-chancellors appointed by the government do not feel accountable to their constituents. They are often dictatorial, corrupt and misappropriate scarce resources. Because they lack popular support, they introduce ethnic and religious politics into the university administration.
(Egbokhare 2007: 63)

Such appointees know that they are there not on merit but as a result of a political affiliation or some similar pragmatic ground. That makes their accountability only to the body that appointed them, i. e. the government. Their services to the government by controlling the academic community enable them to abuse scarce university resources freely without the slightest semblance of accountability and in a corrupt way. In view of their loyalty and services the government allows them to ride freely on scarce university resources. Some of them use university property just like their own private estate and it is not an exaggeration to say that they also run the university like a private estate.

The vice-chancellors on their part follow the pattern in which they were appointed in appointing their own vice presidents, directors, and appointments to other key positions. Here loyalty, acquaintance, and submissiveness rather than merit or qualifications are the criteria by means of which the vice-chancellors pick their key appointees. As Egbokhare argues, "Some university vice-chancellors run the university like their chiefdom and with unbelievable brutality. The negative activity of vice-

chancellors has led to the collapse of the *esprit de corps*, and a break down of authority” (Ibid).

This opens the way for rampant corruption and nepotism. Whether it is appointment to a key position or employing somebody to a job that pays well or sending somebody abroad for higher education, it is done selectively to benefit acquaintances or relatives. The vice-chancellor’s lack of accountability to the constituents plays a significant role in undermining the university.

This has another devastating effect on those members of the university who want to serve it with commitment and dedication. Their lack of voice and marginalization reduces them to helpless spectators in matters that closely concern them. The activities of university leaderships alienate faculty members and other support staff and ends by generating apathy without proportions. Such apathy victimizes the main task of the university, i. e. teaching and research. The university leadership that is involved in the task of benefiting each other has no time or will to look into how the main functions of the university are being handled. The faculty members feeling their marginalization and alienation on the one hand and forced by the economic hardship decide to involve in consultancy work or teaching in other institutions or altogether leaving the country. Hence it is in this way that the task of the university is being undermined by the activities of persons appointed through political expediency rather than merit or accountability to members of the university.

The Production of Knowledge

In Africa the role of the university has been evolving. It has to assume the role that is appropriate to it in this century. The first African universities were established for the purpose of training mid-level functionaries for the colonial administration. In Ethiopia when the Haile Selassie I University, Addis Ababa University since 1974 was established, the Emperor spoke about the tasks of the university as narrated by Balsvik as follows, “In his inaugural address Emperor Haile Selassie talked extensively and generally about the moral and spiritual objectives of a university education. Specifically he asserted that it was vital to promote national unity and educate Ethiopians for service to their country” (2005: 23). Whatever the role given to them at the time of their establishment has been constantly

challenged and their role has been evolving significantly. Obviously, in the manner that they were established at the time, it is clear that they could hardly meet the aspirations of the African people. This is because of the fact that their curricula were irrelevant, their faculty was largely foreign. Such people lack an understanding of the culture and situation in which they work and definitely have their own biases towards the local culture and indigenous knowledge. Moreover the mission of the university was not properly articulated. It was a situation where foreign curricula, and faculty and other factors combined to produce *evolues* if one may use Tempels' expression.

With regard to research the situation was even worse. Those educated in this way were not in a position to articulate the proper agenda for research. The education itself makes this impossible. But on the other hand since no sufficient local resources are allotted for research and it had to rely on funds from outside they were the providers of funds that determined the agenda of research. As Hountondji wrote, both the education and the research were/are highly extraverted (2002). The lack of financial resources for research and laboratory equipment and also lack of readiness on the part of the researchers limited the research to largely be occupied with answering questions raised elsewhere or are tangentially related to us.

But obviously this situation is changing. The importance and role of universities is being recognized progressively. These require from us to question whether the African universities have developed their academic core and are involved in the production of knowledge. The African universities have a lot of problems associated with academic freedom and autonomy as I pointed out above. As a result of these and also lack of funding for research, the production of knowledge in African universities is at a low level. New knowledge is normally produced by the research conducted at the PhD level and by faculty research. This will be testified by the quantity and quality of PhD dissertations that universities produce and the amount of peer-reviewed publication from the faculty members. The low level of knowledge production in African universities is the result of many factors. In addition to the lack of resources for research, there is a lack of incentives for faculty. There is also a lack of the facilities for research like libraries, laboratories, efficient internet connectivity and many more. As another factor hindering the production of knowledge can be mentioned

the heavy teaching load faculty members are forced to shoulder particularly now when universities are expanding. The lack of incentives coupled with the low level of remuneration for faculty members, forces them to do consultancy work and or teaching in other institutions (private or public). It is doubtful that consultancy produces publishable knowledge. Hence it is the combination of these factors that are hindrances to the production of knowledge in African universities.

To overcome this problem both governments and university leaderships must realize that one of the important tasks of the university is the production of knowledge requisite to solve society's problems and function on a similar level with universities elsewhere. There is no doubt that with appropriate conditions and leadership such capacity can be created. Universities can make unique contributions to their countries and humanity at large by producing knowledge. The potential for this is already available. What university leaderships and countries at large should do is create a favorable situation for that. The list of factors that need to be met to realize this include: creating incentives for research and peer-reviewed publication, allocating sufficient funds for research, making the administration of research funds efficient by removing bottlenecks in the administration of research funds, tackling the student-teacher ratio in accordance with accepted standards, so that instructors could be relieved from heavy teaching duties.

The main task in achieving the production of knowledge is creating the academic core of universities. The academic core of universities is constituted by a number of factors including postgraduate enrollments, the academic staff - to - student ratio, proportion of academic staff with PhD degrees, research funding per academic staff, enrollments in science, engineering and technology and graduation in this field, knowledge production in the form of doctoral dissertations, and peer-reviewed publications. If Africa wants to change its predicament and get out of this quagmire, one of the important things it needs to do is build its academic core in at least its main universities. This may be difficult, but is not impossible. There already exists sufficient resource being squandered due to the lack of autonomy and appropriate leadership. Governments and universities should stop looking at each other with suspicion and build a trust. Governments should realize that universities constitute one of the

main centers for the production of knowledge and help them in building the academic core. Governments must realize that having a university of high quality is a delicate issue that cannot be achieved through control and only with political expediency. Instead of looking at universities as subversive institutions governments should take them as critical helpful establishments that are useful not only in the production of knowledge, but also in cultivating the critical and moral awareness necessary for change and transformation.

In order to develop the academic core and involve in the production of knowledge what D. Levine calls the three formative principles must be met. These are:

Unity of research and teaching, freedom of teaching, and academic self-governance. The first of these principles – the unity of research and teaching – countered those systems in which research goes independently, by private scholars or in separate research institutions, without the stimulation of sharing those investigations with young minds, and in which higher education was carried out by scholars who failed to engage in original inquiry. The second principle, Freiheit der Lehre und des Lernens, meant that professors should be free to teach in accordance with their studiously and rationally arrived at convictions. The principle of academic self-government ... was meant to protect academic work from distortions of governmental control. (Levine 2010)

The Internationalization of Higher Education

The internationalization of higher education is a relatively new phenomenon spanning just over a couple of decades. It passed through various phases. It started in Europe in countries like the UK. What began in the form of aid went over to trade and involved the introduction of covering fees for international students. Elsewhere it involved cooperation and exchange. A phase that involved competition also came into being later on.

The phases through which it passed and the activities it involved are diverse. There was a time when the moving of branches of institutions to other countries constituted a form of internationalization. What is more important in advancing internationalization is the demand for global knowledge economy, the competition among so-called emerging economies

and the situation in the countries of the North characterized by an aging population and similar points. This involved selecting most talented students particularly in certain fields like IT. Hence what started as a peripheral activity has now moved into the core of the institutional interest. With globalization, interest in it is ever growing. What started in the form of student exchange has come to embrace a lot of activities including recruitment, curriculum and cooperation on various fronts.

The internationalization of higher education hence can be understood as a process of integrating an international dimension to teaching, research and the service functions of the institutions of higher education. This is facilitated by the emergence of so-called global league tables. The major area in which internationalization finds its full expression is the curricula. Institutions of higher education strive to achieve highly integrated international curricula. This is a point through which a university guarantees its intellectual link to international scholarship.

The European countries making the Bologna agreement the central idea have been able to achieve a high degree of integration. This is one way of assuring that students in not only different institutions but also different countries have access to a material that is more or less similar. Its impact on employability and the maintenance of standards is crucial. That is why it is given emphasis in the case of the Bologna agreement. The Bologna Declaration of 1999, for example, came up with a series of reforms aimed at making European higher education compatible, comparable and competitive for both students and scholars. It represents a form of internationalization. Integrating curricula helps in harmonizing programs in different universities. The effect of a harmonized program both on the quality of education and the employability of graduates from the program is clear. Internationalization hence can be measured by a set of tasks that a university undertakes. Curriculum as indicated is one factor. Universities have to strive to have a curriculum that is not parochial. It has to be made in such a way that both faculty and students have a proper understanding of international contexts. Sending students to universities in other countries is also another point. This activity helps students to have a better understanding of the global situation. It is also necessary not only to send students but also to receive international students. This constitutes the enrichment of university life both academically and culturally. These have

been accompanied by international agreements that foster cooperation on the basis of equality. The outcome of such cooperation helps universities to secure funds that also enhance internationalization. The end result of such an undertaking in the last analysis is that university graduates are global citizens owing to both their experiences and education.

As discussed in the different parts of the paper African universities are facing a number of crises. While there is a desire to internationalize, the kind of situation in which universities are found makes it hard to internationalize. Universities in Africa mostly lack the necessary resources to undertake such activities.

The most serious problem hindering universities to carry out their functions is the lack of agreement on the role of universities. Quite a number of African leaders have expressed the point that universities are important for development. Such utterances by African leaders seem to indicate that leaders or governments generally realize the importance of universities in development and fulfill what is necessary for their development. But the activities of many governments in Africa do not show that they give the importance that universities require. Although in the rhetoric the importance of universities is emphasized in reality the allocation of resources to universities or the way in which academic freedom and autonomy are handled do not show that many African governments are ready to support rhetoric with deeds.

There is another problem that characterizes nearly every African university. Due to their history, the contacts of African universities have been mostly with universities in the North, i.e. Europe and North America. It was not possible to avoid this at the beginning. Thereafter, issues of resources and what may be called a dependency syndrome have made their contacts almost exclusively with universities in the Northern hemisphere, effectively shutting cooperation with African and other non-northern universities. Many African universities could cooperate with each other and attain mutual benefits if they are ready to work together. There is a lingering mentality that the source of knowledge is only the North. The African universities have to realize that they cannot continue indefinitely using knowledge produced elsewhere without themselves producing knowledge. A mentality that keeps us all dependent on Northern universities has to change and we have to think of a genuine cooperation

and harmonization of our programs within Africa. This could be one way of enhancing internationalization. In suggesting this of course I am not in any way proposing isolation from universities in Europe, America or Asia.

African universities realize the importance of internationalization. Student exchange and similar activities like cooperation have a long history in African universities although the extent may not be large enough to have an impact. Further the situation of the universities dictates that internationalization is handled in an ad-hoc, uncoordinated and incoherent manner. Internationalization has to be incorporated into the plan of universities, whatever the plan may be called. But if a university does not have an inner drive to design such a plan and deals with issues in a haphazard way it is difficult to address such an issue. Universities like the Addis Ababa University which has been in the rhetoric of reform for over a decade flirting with one or the other idea (reform, strategic planning, business process reengineering, etc.) without any tangible results except crippling the university, could not tackle this issue seriously. There probably are a few universities that do not face a crisis of one form or the other in Africa. The situation of African universities is one where they face problems associated with their history, financial problems, leadership crisis, crisis of identity and many more. They face the problem of internationalization in a condition where they have to tackle all these problems.

Summarizing the problems that African universities are facing Karen MacGregor wrote,

Quality and weak regulatory frameworks is another challenge and it is at the epicenter of internationalization. Africa's research capacity is also quite marginal, standing at a meager 1% of the world's total. African higher education has continued to depend heavily on external resources in both funding and academic discourse (MacGreger 2011).

African higher education has no meaningful identity and influence. It remains at the periphery of international higher education. Intra-African initiatives at internationalization face formidable hurdles due to lack of will, appropriate policies and resources. The other side of this problem is the risk of brain-drain, commodification and commercialization of knowledge,

unfair collaborations dominated by Western financial and epistemological hegemony and lack of reciprocity.

Conclusion

African universities are found at a critical stage. From their inception the conditions in which they were, were not conditions that could enable them to meet their mission. The reforms that the World Bank introduced in the 1990s have not been favorable for the development of the African university. The main problems of the African university are lack of independence to determine and decide what it wants to be and lack of resources. There is no doubt that a public university needs to be accountable and spend public resources in an appropriate manner. In the case of the African university it is just the lack of the freedom that enables it to determine how it provides its services that has been one of the obstacles. The motive of the reforms was the commodification and commercialization of knowledge. With a motto that says that higher education is a private good as opposed to a public good and undermining the point that even if it may be a private good but that the knowledge that higher education produces, when viewed from the perspective of society is a public good, it undermined higher education. It particularly is harming some forms of knowledge in the humanities due to its limited conception of knowledge as a commodity and an instrument.

The promotion of the fields of science and technology at the expense of the humanities is not a healthy phenomenon. In Ethiopia the policy that the government has adopted in the last few years admits 70% of the new entrants into universities in the fields of science, engineering and technology, while the faculties of the humanities and social sciences have to scramble for the remaining 30%. Such a one-sided emphasis on only the sciences and technology is not helpful for a healthy and balanced development of a nation. Human life cannot be fulfilled by developing science and technology alone and building roads and houses or producing abundant food. If we follow Newman's idea of the university, the university is a place for the pursuit of broad liberal education. It has the aim of creating in its graduates, in all the possible fields of knowledge, maturity of judgment and intellectual strength.

It is clear that one of the purposes of university education is to prepare its graduates for a career. However university education should not be limited to that alone. It has to enable them to develop a general socialization process that can deal with science and scientific issues by raising normative, ethical issues. It has to be able to go beyond expert knowledge and contribute to an intellectual enlightenment expected of a person that is properly educated. University education should lead to not only the self-knowledge of the graduates themselves but also of the fields that they study. It is the role and contribution of the different fields of knowledge within the cultural context in which they operate that has to clearly be understood by those who are educated and practice the knowledge.

The emphasis on science and technology may be motivated by the desire to overcome material problems/poverty. Despite this, it is not necessary to lose sight of the purpose of education. In addition to expertise, maturity and intellectual strength, education should also aim at decency and wisdom. We may give a big value to theories, concepts and abstraction. In doing so, we forget values and conscience. An education that happens in a situation where values are not considered and where the highest priority is efficiency does not do much good to humanity. In implementing the 70:30 ratio for sciences, engineering, etc. on the one hand the humanities on the other we probably commit double mistakes. For those going into engineering we give them only training that makes them efficient in their areas but ignorant with regards to values, norms and wisdom. Secondly by reducing the number of those who could study the humanities we create a shortage of educated persons that are useful because of their education.

A nation's multidimensional development will depend on the mental horizons of its citizens in all fields of knowledge. One of the tasks of the university has to be to engender a sense of human and social growth and development. We have to know the purpose of science and technology itself. Human interests and aspirations, that do not jeopardize our relations with nature, should be at the center of the development of science and technology. The humanities which help in exploring and defining the goals of science and technology must not be marginalized. Along with educating, the production of knowledge in a way that unites teaching and research is necessary. Education should avoid one dimensionality. Along side knowledge and skills, education should also nurture a critical spirit in those

who go through it. Teaching and research must be conducted in a situation where reflection on interests, values and practices is the *modus operandi*. The main task and mission of the university requires to be done within a reflexive and self-critical milieu.

The reform that African universities have to implement must be one which empowers the African university to properly determine what it wants to be in a way that takes into account the interests and aspirations of the African people. The African people who host the university and sustain it through their resources need to benefit from the tasks that the university carries out. One of its cardinal tasks has to be to solve society's problems holistically. The act by which universities solve society's problems is also the act by which they show their moral commitment to the community that supports and sustains them. If the university is given the necessary resources with an accompanying freedom and accountability it can definitely play its role of producing knowledge and educating the necessary manpower that puts this knowledge to practice.

References

- Anderson, R. 2009. "The Idea of a University Today," in K. Withers (ed.) *First Class? Challenges and Opportunities for UK's University Sector*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Balsvik, R. Ronning. 2005. *Haile Selassie's Students: The Intellectual and Social Background to Revolution 1952 – 1974*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. 1975. *The Education of Black people: Ten Critiques.1906-1960*. (ed.) Herbert Aptheker. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Egbokhore, F. 2007. "University Decline and its Reasons: Imperatives for Change and Relevance" In J. Kenny (ed.) *The Idea of an African University: The Nigerian Experience*. Washington D. C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Gutema, Bekele. 2013. "Some Thoughts on the African University", in Gutema, B. and Verharen C. (eds.) *African Philosophy in Ethiopia: Ethiopian Philosophical Studies II*. Washington, D. C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Gutmann, Amy. 2002. *Democratic Education*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hammer, M. and Champy, J. A. 1993. *Reengineering the Corporation: A Manifesto for Business Revolution*. New York: Harper Business Books.
- Horkheimer, M. 1992. "Selections from 'Traditional and Critical Theory'" in Ingram, D. and Simon-Ingram, Julia (eds). *Critical Theory: The Essential Readings*. New York: Paragon House.
- Houngnikpo, Mathurin. 2006. *Africa's Elusive Quest for Development*. New York. Pal Grave Macmillan.
- Hountondji, Paulin. 2002. *The Struggle for Meaning: Reflections on Philosophy, Culture and Democracy in Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Johansson, Henry, J. et al.1993. *Business Process Reengineering: Break Point Strategies for Market Dominance*. John Wiley and Sons.
- Levine, Donald. "The Idea of the University, Take One: On the Genius of this Place" (<http://iotu.uchicago.edu/levine.html>) accessed 11/2/2010.
- Lawton, Denis. 1994. *The Tory Mind on Education, 1979-1994*. London: Falmer.
- MacGreger, Karen. 2011. *Africa: Higher Education Internationalizing–Slowly*. University World News. Issue 170.
- Mkandawire, Thandika. (ed.) 2005. *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development*. London/New York: Zed Books.
- Mazrui, Ali, A. 2003. "Towards Re-Africanizing African Universities: Who Killed Intellectualism in the Postcolonial Era?" in *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of*

- International Relations*, Vol. 2, Number 3 and 4, Fall and Winter 2003, (135-163).
- Newman, H. 1907. *The Idea of a University: Defined and Illustrated*. New York: Longmans.
- Smith, D. 2005. "Universities on the Threshold of the New Millennium", in Gutema, B and Smith, D. (eds.) *African Philosophy at the Threshold of the New Millennium: Papers of the 7th Annual Conference of ISAPS*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Printing Press.
- Owen, Tom. 1980. "The University Grants Committee", *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 6. No.6, 255-278
- Trow, Martin. 1993. *Managerialism and the Academic Profession: Quality and Control*. Stockholm: Council for Studies of Higher Education.
- University of Dar-es-Salaam. 1999. Dar-es-Salaam Declaration on Academic Freedom and social Responsibility of Academics. Dar-es-Salaam: University of Dar-es-Salaam.
- Verharen, C. Charles. 2012. "Philosophy and the Future of African Universities: Ethics and Imagination", in Gutema, B. and Verharen C. (eds.) *African Philosophy in Ethiopia: Ethiopian Philosophical Studies II*. Washington, D. C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.