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The response of institutions of higher learning to Africa's deteriorating social and economic situations

TRADE AS AN ENGINE OF DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

by

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This is not the first nor it is the last time that eminent academicians and others assemble to review what may have gone wrong with development strategies in Africa. A survey of African development plans and suggested strategies, especially related to their respective objectives reveals a number of weaknesses. Some are structural in character. Others on the other hand, emanate from misconceptions held by persons who have had the responsibility of drawing and implementing the plan(s). Another important contributory factor is human conflict and the attendant inability to identify the kind of contribution which each sector can make to the whole development process.

This idea of planning is not entirely new because every one plans, not only for the present but also what to do tomorrow and after. We shall, however, be concerned with that kind of planning which is intended to increase national welfare. Planning as a social science gained in popularity during and after the early period of the struggle for African political emancipation. This period also coincided with the emergence of many institutions of higher learning in Africa.

Consequently, the creation or establishment of institutional structures was purposely designed for specific objectives. It represented a total package to many pious hopes: promises of a better and more abundant life for all; just and egalitarian societies; visions of a bright future deriving from greater job and education opportunities for many; and an improvement in the level and quality of services provided for the welfare of the nation at large. This is the background which forms a framework against which this analysis intends to review the contribution of trade as a possible engine of growth and development and the role the institutions of higher learning in Africa have played.

In proceeding to re-examine trade as an engine of development, it is not implied that every failure should be laid at the doorstep of the African institutions of higher learning. That would be a too simplistic a view to take. First and foremost, the theory of trade in most developing countries is highly mechanistic. Empirical evidence shows, above all else, that trade simply acts to transmit growth impulses from the developed to developing countries through the process of supply(s) and demand(d) Curves. And similarly from the standpoint of indifference curves. The question that requires an answer is finding out "where we may have gone wrong". Attempts will also be made to suggest needed re-orientation in order to ensure the effective contribution of these institutions in the area of trade. These institutions do not exist in isolation and most of their subvention is provided by the State. As part and parcel of the society, they must of necessity concern themselves with the assets and liabilities entailed within the broad context of development strategies at the national, subregional, regional and global levels.

Many researchers have pronounced themselves on the role of institutions of higher learning. Scholars like James Perkins draw our attention to certain contrasting factors. He points to certain observed differences in the roles played by these institutions. For instance, in some parts of the world, "traditional universities are almost the sole agencies for post secondary education" but that "as countries develop, the needs for talent become more diverse ... academic programs and institutions become more specialized to take care of these specialized needs". <sup>1/</sup>

Many of these differences are formed by either circumstances or intentions or both. We can thus use them as departure points for distinguishing the following two structures:

- (i) A university is supposed by that institution or similar which produces high-level manpower in professional fields and arts and sciences. It is also presumed to be capable of conducting research and advanced studies in those fields with a view to furthering the intellectual and professional development process.
- (ii) Other higher education institutions are supposedly expected to deal inter alia with programmes of instruction in methodology, technical practice, and fieldwork in areas not covered by university education, notably pedagogy, paraprofessional areas, and vocational-technical training. <sup>2/</sup>

It is not without reason to consider these institutions as indispensable instruments within the framework of national development strategies. In other words, they have been conceived with the aim of:

(a) training higher-level cadres needed by a country to fulfill and perform such functions as could enable them to:

- (i) take their place in the world;
- (ii) satisfy the management of all day to day activities.

(b) developing and advancing knowledge and extending its limits in the political, social and economic fields; and

(c) preserving, improving and importing information about the national cultural heritage.

Consequently, and in the light of the above, we need to situate these institutions by reviewing briefly the genesis of the problem. This can be better appreciated if some space is devoted to their historical perspective and the crisis syndrome in which trade often finds itself.

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<sup>1/</sup> James A. Perkins, in his foreword to Higher Education and Social change, Kenneth W. Thompson and Barbara R. Fogel (eds.), Praeger, New York, 1976.

<sup>2/</sup> Kenneth W. Thompson and Barbara R. Fogel (eds.) Higher Education and Social Change, Praeger, 1976, p. 151.

## II. A SYNOPSIS OF THE GENESIS OF THE CRISIS PROBLEM

Trade in Africa can and has proved over the years as an engine of economic growth and far less in terms of development. It has also tended, in recent years, to become a significant root cause of the continent's socio-economic crisis. The issue is to be addressed by reviewing two or three aspects of the causes of the crisis against the background of what the institutions of higher learning in Africa can do and should have done. It has been said many a times, that every human problem has a possible solution in the long run notwithstanding the fact that economist John Maynard Keynes dismissed long run solutions with great cruelty since most people do live long enough. Implied is not a total rejection but rather that it is equally important to be mindful of short and medium term solutions when dealing with socio-economic problems.

What is crucial is not only to understand but also to tackle systematically the many root causes of the African socio-economic crisis. More importantly, to use all available tools and resources for such a task. We shall therefore review some of the cause to the deteriorating state of the African trade structures. It may also be asked whether trade has by itself disproportionately contributed to worsening the crisis. More specifically, what measures have institutions of higher learning in Africa taken on their own or at the request of governments to arrest the situation from deteriorating any further?

A point of common agreement is the fact that "development" is a shared responsibility of all. In other words, a national development plan need not be an exclusive prerogative of only a few select sectors, individuals or the government bureaucrats. Anyone who believes, as some government bureaucrats seem to imply by their behaviour towards other sectors of the community, as if they are the only custodians of a country's process of development, need reminding of the dangers of this falsehood. It is more profitable and productive for time and resources to be devoted to ensuring and acknowledging that the development process take a leaf from Karl Marx's slogan of "from each according to his (utmost) ability and to each according to the (collectively assessed) needs". That in my view, is how the role of the institutions of higher learning in Africa ought to be assessed.

### (a) The Problem of Development Strategies in a Nutshell

A formal foundation for linking trade and development, especially for developing economies was provided by W. Arthur Lewis. He pointed to a stable hundred year (1843-1969) link between growth in developed countries and primary exports of developing countries. But that this eventually requires some organizing in addition to planning. 3/

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3/ W. Arthur Lewis, Aspects of Tropical Trade, Almquist and Wiksell, Stockholm, 1969.

The subject of development planning strategies in most developing countries has tended to fall between two stools. It is viewed on the one hand, as a technical problem by technicians that claim a certain expertise of conventional theories. Others on the other hand, considered it as dealing with mechanical problems by emphasizing the issue of resolving problems pertaining to the machinery of administration by administrators and only occasionally calling for assistance from other experts.

An indepth survey of many plans shows them as "top-to-bottom" or "top-down" blueprints. In other words, "blueprints" conceived by government bureaucrats at the top of the pyramid then handed down for implementation, irrespective of lack of consultation with the latter. It is highly debatable to what extent the institutions of higher learning in Africa are involved. This is why in this analysis we shall be focusing attention in two interrelated areas. First, the extent to which trade can and should be an instrument for or considered as "an engine of economic development..." within the broad development context. Secondly, an enquiry into the role of institutions of higher learning with regard to ameliorating the African socio-economic situations. That is how capable can they inject into trade or lubricate the trade engine to move towards ameliorating Africa's socio-economic crisis?

This is not to say there are no other problems which contribute to Africa's deteriorating economic conditions. All the same, this analysis will confine itself to the above rather limited areas of development plans. We shall refer to the peripheral role of these institutions, in particular, the lack of involvement in formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating national development plans. Priority areas of development for most African economies are already well-articulated by the African governments themselves and by the United Nations bodies like the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Similarly, the Association of African Universities and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). In other words, the crisis is one of translating the will into practice.

Consequently, institutions of higher learning in Africa ought to have taken steps to involve themselves more closely by examining and formulating "theories and policy options for their societies" with a view to "throwing fresh light upon development needs of their respective countries, on the basis of high quality research and analysis". 4/ Concomitant with the above, is the extent of the preparedness and adaptability of these institutions to the challenges of development and resolving the socio-economic crisis.

We should perhaps dwell a little on some of the observed difficulties of adaptability faced by these institutions in terms of developmental demands. Much has already been said on this subject. The debate has dealt with many causes of the difficulties and conflicts, some of which are not the making of these institutions alone. Rather, they include or are contributed to by the environment and circumstances at the material time.

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4/ Alexander S. Kwapong, "The Relevance of the African University to the Development Needs of Africa", Report of the 5th General Conference of the Association of African Universities, Yamoussoukro, 15-19 December 1980, p. 54.

The point of highest resistance to the external intrusion<sup>+</sup> by these institutions in the national development process comes from senior civil servants who under normal circumstances ought to have been the channels for such contact. This is unlike the situation in the developed industrialized countries where there is a great sense of mutuality of interest. In Africa, on the contrary, it is the latter who have tended to be most aloof and even lead the campaign of condemning the institutions of higher learning viewing them in the most derogatory terms as "elitists" or "Ivory Towers". Rather than as complementary and supportive instruments of national development. Perhaps this was at the back of the mind of the then President of the East African Academy, Dr. W. Chagula when in September 1966, he offered a partial definition of an "elite" as one who tends to maintain a certain self-assumed social distance to both rural and urban issues. 5/ In other words, exemplified by behaviour of individuals in these institutions that tends to negate them from being centres for intellectual mobilizations and radiance.

Other areas of conflict and their so-called inappropriateness to economic development of some of these institutions emanate in the structure of their curricula, the methods of teaching and research. In particular, their desire to maintain the so called high international academic standards. This should not by itself have restricted these institutions from adapting themselves to local problems. The two are not mutually exclusive. There is considerable under-utilized intellectual potential. Most of which can be mobilized for consultancy services in those areas where the discipline of the civil service routine is incapable of being innovative. It is also possible to envisage a built-in compensating effect if the "braindrain" trends were to be reversed. In other words, employees in these institutions would have both alternative and supplementary means of earning additional income to compensate for the "frills" enjoyed by their counterparts in the parastatals and those holding senior government offices. This will not by itself necessarily put a stop to the "braindrain". Rather, it can certainly minimise or slow down its many adverse effects on the African economies.

Causes for the African brain drain, apart from better salaries abroad, is the feeling of those working in these institutions not being appreciated. This is coupled with a lack of better research facilities. Opportunity for research on practical problems by nationals creates a sense of involvement. It also affords the institutions inside knowledge on how to tackle national development problems. A too often overlooked aspect is that the professors and lecturers are likely to make greater use of their under- and graduates students in carrying out such work. In a way, the institutions would find it necessary to make changes to their curricula, the research pattern and methods of teaching with a view to relating theoretical concepts to actual situations.

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<sup>+</sup> I define external intrusion to include the advice offered to government departments by any national body like an institution of higher learning classified not as a branch of the "civil service".

5/ Svein-Erik Rastad, "Issues of University Development in East Africa", A Thesis submitted in part fulfilment for the Degree in Master of Arts in the University of Nairobi, (ECA Library: 378.4(676) C5535, p. 316.

In the few African countries where this had taken place, it had proved quite productive. But the examples are still too few to give any comfort. Commendable examples include the use made in Nigeria of the Institute of Agricultural Research and Special Services at the Ahmadu Bello University in conducting research for six Northern Nigerian State governments. Additionally, it received research contracts from the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Agriculture and the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture at Ibadan. Similarly, 20 teachers of the University of Science and Technology at Kumasi in Ghana took the initiative in 1968 by setting up a Voluntary Technology Group devoted to solving specific technological problems presented by local businessmen, industrialists and farmers. The success of its efforts led eventually to the creation of a Technology Consultancy Centre in 1972. The end result was an improvement in Ghana's quality of local handicrafts, textiles, pottery and woodwork products.

It is in the light of the above that these institutions can and should make a major contribution in the implementation of development strategies and plans. They ought to be capable of effectively supporting competent government departments in respect of many neglected areas. They can only do so by orienting their research programmes and thesis work with a view to evaluating and monitoring a number of trade projects in the development plan(s) or programme(s).

There are many people engaged in trade with no formal education or without certificates from institutions of higher learning. However, these people are quite successful in business and in fact are the main lubricants of the trade engine. It is therefore worthy of serious consideration that non-formal education by these institutions be extended to cover innovation in the trade sector. The idea is not new. It is quite widespread and conforms to our search for alternatives to both education and accelerating development. 6/

The point which the foregoing analysis had tried to convey is that institutions of higher learning like any sector in the economy, must play an effective role in the process of economic development. That resistance and conflict are inevitable. Consequently, these institutions need to be able to take the initiative to demonstrate that some of the prejudices against them are ill founded and unproductive.

(b) An Overview of the historical perspective of the Crisis

Crisis in Africa is not an entirely new phenomenon because the continent has lived through several kinds of crises. For instance, the imbalance between the rural poor and their semi-affluent urban counterparts; appalling poverty and lack of food self-sufficiency; the crisis of under-developed and under-utilized educational institutions; imbalance between trade in the subsistence and the money economy sectors. A combination of these factors manifested themselves clearly when the African continent distinguished itself as accounting for over 70 per cent all least developed countries (LDCs).

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6/ See ECA paper on Non-Formal Education and Development: Basic Issues for Consideration, E/ECA/AATD/84/8 (Chapter III).

Institutions of higher learning in Africa can no longer hide behind the cloak of being a much recent phenomenon in comparison to their counterparts in the Western tradition. The majority are indeed quite recent and a direct creation of the State having emerged as part of the independence struggle package. However, as Table 1 shows, some among them like the ancient seats of Moslem higher learning at Al Azhar in Cairo and Kurawain in Fez (Morocco) are twice as old as the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Paris. 7/ Similarly for those which existed at Timbuktu, in Mali and in Ethiopia.

TABLE 1  
LIST OF SOME EARLY AFRICAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

Name/Location	Year when founded
1. Kurawain/Qarawlyine (Fez - Morocco)	AD 859
2. Al Azhar (Cairo - Egypt)	AD 972
3. Fourah Bay College (Freetown - Sierra Leone)	1827
4. University of Cape Town (Cape Town - South Africa)	1829
5. University of Witwatersrand (Johannesburg - South Africa)	1895
6. Fort Hare College (Cape Province - South Africa)	1915
7. Makerere College	1922
8. (a) Gordon Memorial College <sup>+</sup>	1924
(b) Kitchener School of Medicine <sup>+</sup> (Khartoum - Sudan)	"
9. Achimota College (Accra - Ghana)	1927
10. Yaba Higher College <sup>++</sup> (Lagos - Nigeria)	1934
11. Pius XII Catholic College <sup>+++</sup> (Roma - Lesotho)	1945
12. The University of South Africa <sup>++++</sup>	

<sup>+</sup> These two institutions were amalgamated to form part of the University of Khartoum in 1955.

<sup>++</sup> Yaba Higher College was the nearest approach to a university institution in Nigeria.

<sup>+++</sup> Pius XII Catholic College started with four priests and five students in an abandoned primary school building in Roma outside the Lesotho (formerly Basutoland) capital. The College later in 1955 entered into a special relationship with the University of South Africa. Its administrative structure in 1963 was transferred from the Catholic Church to the three High Commission territories to form the nucleus of the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS), which was established in 1964 but came to an end in November 1975.

<sup>++++</sup> The University of South Africa used to be an umbrella for many colleges and Universities on the Republic of South Africa but many of the institutions have developed as independent colleges and universities. However, it continues to offer correspondence degree courses and it is probably the largest such institution in the world.

The chronological listing in Table 1 giving the foundation dates of some early African institutions of higher learning up to 1945 leaves many other questions unanswered. However, in later years, some provided foundation stones or material for certain of the present universities. In Nigeria for example, the nearest approach to a university before the birth of Nigeria's university institution in January 1948 was Yaba Higher College. It served an important role as Nigeria's main local source for teachers, medical assistants, assistant agricultural officers, forest surveyors and administrators during its life span between 1930 and 1947. 8/

An overview of how these institutions have contributed to the crisis rather than to ameliorating it subsists both in their historical beginning and structural framework. This is confirmed by their orientation and outlook towards problems of national development. In contrast to their western counterparts which exist for continuity and conservation of traditions, those in Africa on the other hand, were perceived to act as powerful instruments for political change and have not done much to change that image. African countries shook off the shackles of colonial political systems (whatever that is supposed to mean) by rejecting the multiparty system in preference for the one-party democracies or "monocracies". Paradoxically, their institutions of higher learning have not had the same degree of success with restructuring the inherited economic structures. Their curricula, research programmes and teaching methods continue to be replicas of western traditions.

The pattern was reinforced by the general British empire practice for universities outside metropole Britain which were required to develop as affiliates of the English universities. 9/ Even the ancient University of Kurawain which is twice as old as Oxford has had to adopt the Paris curriculum. Added to the above, is the fact that all the first principals in the British territories were Englishmen who naturally tended to uphold the so called high British standards of academic excellence. The syllabi were intended to qualify their students for entry into and acceptance for the award of certificates of the "patron" university. It will be wrong to blame the pioneer principals for this trend because there is enough empirical evidence to the contrary. Resistance to change to anything other than the Western education tradition came very strongly from the African scholars and intellectuals, products of Cambridge, Oxford or London. In their opinion, it was tantamount not only to "softening" of standards but also equivalent to exporting "second-rate" education and degrees. 10/

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8/ Vincent Chukwuemeka Ike, University Development in Africa: the Nigerian Experience, Oxford University Press, Ibadan, 1976, p. 4.

9/ The University of Fourah Bay in Sierra Leone (University of Durham), University of Ibadan in Nigeria (University of London), Makerere University in Uganda (University of London) to name but a few.

10/ R. Cranford Pratt, "African Universities and Western Tradition", The Journal of Modern African Studies, vol. 3, No. 3, October 1965, p. 422.

The authorities at the University of Ibadan decided to retain the colours of the London University hoods on the new Ibadan hoods like building a monument to their fourteen years affiliation with the latter. It is this kind of behaviour which explains why many of these African institutions have not made greater use of their extra-mural studies to help with solving development issues. There is an absence of attempts to dovetail themselves into the society fabric. We would have expected them to have been at the forefront in conducting refresher courses and other specialized short courses. In particular, catering for civil servants dealing with trade matters in the ministries of commerce or trade, industry, marketing and distribution of mineral and agricultural products, indigenous business houses and including chambers of commerce and industry. This is not intended to be a wholesale condemnation in the light of the earlier positive steps by the Kumasi group and the extra-Mural activities of the Development Studies and Research Centre at the University of Khartoum. Except that these examples are the exception rather than the rule.

The element of gaining international academic acceptance, to a very large extent prevented them from being innovative in such sectors as those covering trade. The severance of the umbilical cords with Durham University for Fourah Bay University, with London for Makerere, Ibadan and others did very little to bring about an immediate restructuring of curricula, the method of teaching and even the research topics for the thesis and doctorate dissertations that have continued to pour out of these institutions.

SYNOPSIS OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN AFRICA  
(numbers)  
1975-1976

Country	Universities			Other Higher Education Institutions		
		Teacher Training	Technical Training	Subject Oriented		
1. Ethiopie	2	3	1	4		
2. Angola	1	-	-	-		
3. Bénin	1	-	-	-		
4. Burkina Faso	1	1	-	1		
5. Botswana	1	-	-	-		
6. Burundi	1	1	-	-		
7. Ivory Coast	1	2	2	4		
8. Gabon	1	4	-	-		
9. Ghana	3	n.a.	1	3		
10. Guinea	-	1	3	9		
11. Cameroon	1	-	-	2		
12. Kenya	2	-	-	-		
13. Congo	1	-	-	-		
14. Lesotho	1	-	-	-		
15. Liberia	1	-	-	1		
16. Madagascar	1	-	2	1		
17. Malawi	1	-	-	-		
18. Mali	-	2	2	3		

SYNOPSIS OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN AFRICA (Cont'd)  
(numbers)  
1975-1976

Country	Universities			Other Higher Education Institutions		
		Teacher Training	Technical Training	Subject Oriented		
19. Mauritania	-	1	-	-	-	1
20. Mauritius	1	1	1	-	-	-
21. Mozambique	1	-	-	-	-	-
22. Niger	1	-	-	-	-	-
23. Nigeria	6	8	8	-	-	-
24. Reunion	1	-	-	-	-	2
25. Rwanda	1	1	-	-	-	-
26. Zambia	1	6	3	-	-	2
27. Senegal	1	-	-	-	-	1
28. Sierra Leone	-	1	1	-	-	-
29. Somalia	1	1	-	-	-	-
30. Sudan	3	4	9	-	-	14
31. Swaziland	1	1	1	-	-	2
32. Tanzania	1	1	1	-	-	1
33. Togo	1	-	-	-	-	-
34. Chad	1	-	2	-	-	3
35. Central African Republic	1	-	-	-	-	-
36. Zaire	2	11	10	-	-	-
	45	39	49			62

Source : International Association of Universities: World List of Universities, other institutions of Higher Education and University Organizations, 1975-1976, 12th edition, Paris 1975.

(c) The Crisis Syndrome and Trade

Let us first briefly review this syndrome on another plane. Many of the problems are part of a bigger syndrome in which trade activities play a major part. The apparent aloofness and lack of innovativeness shown by the African institutions of higher learning is yet another of these contributory factors. This kind of aloofness is like the story of an ostrich that burries its head in sand when pursued, in the belief that it cannot be seen. How naive can institutions that are part and parcel of a modern society believe that they can adopt such a self-defeating approach to problems which require collective action?

Why should this be so is the next question to be addressed. We have already made reference to the inappropriateness of the curricula, methods of teaching, research topics in these institutions in terms of resolving national problems. We have observed further a bias towards theories of economics which have no immediate application to national development problems.

It will certainly be a very "sad" day if we are going to wait for another Dr. David Livingstone to come and rediscover anew the Victoria Falls. Surely he does not need to rediscover for Africa, the need to re-orient the curricula, methods of teaching economics and research programmes nor the importance of trade as an engine of economic development for the African continent and respectively for our institutions of higher learning.

Why should policymakers in Africa be conditioned into waiting upon international organizations, rather than turning to their own institutions, to know about the state of their economies? What can we therefore say about the various faculties of economics in the African institutions? Is that to imply their inability to appreciate to the same extent as the World-Bank that "the international economic environment has been difficult for all developing countries during the last four years". Nor that "while world trade stagnated and commodity prices have declined, many developed countries have increased protectionist barriers for goods from developing countries". Nor that "these external factors have aggravated the long-term economic deterioration in Africa". 11/ Over and above continues the IBRD report, the fall in world market shares for crops exported by Africa which started in the 1970s continued in the first half of the 1980s. Most of the declines have occurred in commodities where Africa has a comparative advantage and which are also likely to remain its main potential source of foreign exchange earnings.

A brief recapitulation of the African world economic position easily exposes most of the rootcauses to this crisis. Basically because in international exchange, developing countries are over dependent on the export of primary commodities. A dependency which is both commodity and geographically constrained. In other words:

- (i) primary agricultural and mineral products account for nearly three-quarters of total exports. Even in the few African countries with a semblance of industrial product exports, it is found to consist of unprocessed metals, yarn, fabrics and other low-processing stage products;
- (ii) nearly three quarters or more of Africa's total world exports is destined for the highly developed countries. Relations with other developing countries and regions in the context of interregional trade and broader ECDC relations accounts for around 20 per cent. Intra-African trade, in terms of sources and destination of trade in goods and services is around 5 to 6 per cent when oil is included and about 10 to 11 per cent when the latter is excluded and added to it unrecorded trade and other invisible transactions;
- (iii) dependence on transnational corporations (TNCs) has not diminished with the advent of political independence. TNCs still continue to control not only international trade exchanges of developing countries but also the distribution channels at the domestic level. And this is in spite of their decreasing share in the production of primary products in most developing countries.

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11/ The World Bank, Toward Sustained Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Joint Programme of Action, Washington, D.C., September 1984, p. 11.

The above picture makes clear that much needs to be done. The question is by whom, at what level and/or in which specific sectors?

Many of the answers have already been provided at national, subregional, regional and global levels. For instance, participants during the Monrovia Symposium on the future development prospects of Africa towards the year 2000, addressed themselves to the question of how Africa would or should look like at the end of the current century. They reiterated a known fact that "the world economic situation is a source of ceaseless concern even to the most unshakable optimists. Rejecting a radical reversal of economic relationships, applying traditional remedies to a crisis with pernicious trickle effects, they ... realized the futility to ... impose a conventional approach". 12/

To answer this question shows an appreciation of other equally important related questions, additional to those in the foregoing paragraphs. For example, why does Africa produce mainly for export and imports the bulk of consumption goods and services? More pointedly, how long can development be approached with trade structures that are export-oriented, confined only to primary agricultural and mineral products destined to limited markets? What is the role which the institutions of higher learning in Africa must play?

Coming back to the role of these institutions, I am reminded of a statement by Shridath Ramphal about some of the background to most post independence universities of the developing world. When many of them were established, the concept "the founders had in mind ... was also allied to the expectation that they (universities) would play a dynamic part in the process of national-building in their deepest connotations, and in the generation of development within these processes ... that it was the latter image of the university as a factor of development that become more dominant ... led governments to provide increasingly larger funds for higher education ... at the expense of expanding primary-school facilities". 13/

The question therefore is to establish whether such investment has been justified? In other words, what have these institutions to say to those citizens and others who hold the view that higher education has absorbed too high a proportion of educational budgets for no comparable return or gain by the respective nations? Granted that is difficult to provide an exact cost-benefit analysis. However, this in no way reduces the need for these institutions to show "value-for-money".

There are many people who will be quick to dismiss such criticisms as mere allegations. How frivolous are these allegations I leave to those more competent to pass judgement. Basically, because education has a purpose and my days at Keele University and subsequent academic pursuit made me more aware, that institutions charged with this responsibility must "help students live their own lives ... Specialism is a means for advancement in our mobile social structure; ... (envisaging) the fact

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12/ Organization of African Unity, What kind of Africa by the year 2000? Final report of the Monrovia Symposium on the future development prospects of Africa towards the year 2000, Monrovia (Liberia), 1979, p. 43.

13/ Shridath S. Ramphal, "International Co-operation and Development: the Role of Universities", The Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 17, No. 2, June 1979, pp. 193-194.

that a society controlled wholly by specialists is not a wisely ordered society ... General education is ... required in a democracy where the public elects its leaders and officials; the ordinary citizen must be discerning enough so that he will not be deceived by appearances". 14/ However, this does not imply a rejection and it does not dispute the necessity of these institutions as important instruments for social and economic transformation in tackling the crisis. 15/ But they should do more than mere passing on new knowledge if they are not to be doomed as "failures". 16/

If for no other reason, the research topics, thesis or dissertations pouring out of these institutions need to address ways of finding solutions to some of these problems. Writing in one of my books in 1977, I drew the attention of these institutions to this subject by making a reference to a doctoral thesis on "balancing a fly on the water surface". I would be the last person to question the great academic satisfaction for the researcher and the academic faculty under whose auspices such a research is conducted. However, in a continent such as Africa, afflicted by the largest number of the world's designated least developed countries (LDCs) the largest number of landlocked countries and which is facing persistence famine, such academic excellence may be a wrong priority at this material time. 17/ What is required is not to discourage research. Rather, it should be geared towards evolving "an identity of their own image and (adapting) the alien form ... to one that is recognisably part of the African social and cultural environment". 18/

Consequently, such research as have been undertaken in these institutions should have made greater effort in putting forward possible suggestions or alternative solutions aimed at getting the African trade structure out of its quandary. In particular, by paying much attention to aspects of mobilizing domestic trade, the promotion and expansion of intra-African trade as well as promoting economic co-operation among developing countries (ECDC). These activities are more reliable prerequisites for collective self-reliance and self-sustaining economic growth and development.

### III. NEW DIRECTIVES IN TRADE DEVELOPMENT

The foregoing analysis reveals several inadequacies of conventional theories of international trade. Also their appropriateness for the African economies which are still predominantly producers and exporters of primary commodities. 19/ Trade and its associated activities of production, marketing and distribution when correctly

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14/ Sir James Mountford, KEELE: An Historical Critique, Routledge Regan Paul, London, 1972, pp. 140-144.

15/ Clark Kerr, The use of the University, Harper and Torch, New York, 1966, vii.

16/ Kenneth Kaunda, "Speech to the First Congregation, University of Zambia on 17 May 1969" Topic, No. 48, 1972.

17/ Jonathan H. Chileshe, The Challenge of Developing Intra-African Trade, East African Literature Bureau, Nairobi, 1977, p. 229.

18/ J.F.A. Ajavi, "Towards an African Academic Community", Creating the African University; Emerging Issues of the 1970s, Oxford University Press, Ibadan, 1973, p. 11.

19/ Conventional wisdom of economists from Ricardo to Keynes according to the "theory of deterioration" by John Spraos in No. 4 of Trade and Development assumed that, abstracting from cyclical ups and downs, expansion in population would increase consumption and production and that the terms of trade of primary products vis-à-vis manufactures would be subject to an improving tendency. However, empirical evidence as also stated by Paul Prebisch, Singer and others radically challenges this view. Commodity prices have tended to increase but terms of trade have been deteriorating. Developing Africa's resources endowment and possibilities of comparative advantage, would under normal circumstances have presented such a deterioration.

ordered is an effective engine for growth and development. But this can not take place under the trade structures inherited in Africa where the former metropolitan powers failed to provide ways and means for coping with exigencies or for harmonious and independent economic development. Consequently, the African economies found themselves incapable of acting as alternatives to the ills suffered from the Nord-South trade exchange relationships. A combination of these factors, in part, help to explain the paucity of domestic and intra-African trade as well as the lack of economic relations with other developing regions.

A phenomenon of the current international economic relations is the absence of a real and meaningful dialogue in international trade. Developing countries' incapacity to influence such negotiations in this field has been worsened by the continuing decline in their export earning power. <sup>20/</sup> We shall therefore proceed to examine these issues at three parallel levels of action. The institutions of higher learning, especially their respective economics departments need to appreciate the implications of policy objectives, and aspirations of governments and the peoples who are the beneficiaries of their work. In other words, how responsive and knowledgeable have the African institutions been of the fact that a nation's education is only meaningful by relating its curricula, teaching methods and research programmes to national expectations?

Consequently, the new directives in trade development is a question of "where and how to reactivate trade into an engine of development?" In other words, attention in the subsequent chapter is focused on (a) domestic trade, (b) intra-african trade and (c) economic co-operation among developing countries (ECDC) since these are areas of the greatest potential.

(a) Domestic trade<sup>+</sup>

Domestic trade activity implies all exchanges in goods and services conducted within national borders and includes related activities of production, storage, transport and the distribution channels. The system bases itself on establishing internal linkages between broadly-defined production and consumption as well as transportation of products and goods or services offered to consumers or end-users. However, the inherited pre-independence economic structures continue to focus attention on

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<sup>20/</sup> The developed countries seem to blame the crisis on the world recession of the early 1980s. Developing countries on the other hand, have included in their blame the deliberate manipulation of prices by the major transnational corporations who are seen to be directly and indirectly supported by their home governments.

<sup>+</sup> I take the opportunity to express a sense of gratitude to my colleague and friend Dr. Bingu Wa Mutharika for unselfishly sharing with me our common belief in the importance of harnessing the potential of domestic trade as an important African economic development strategy, today and during our tomorrow.

promoting only trade in export-oriented commodities. The emergence and multiplier effects of the so-called "parallel economic activities" have never really attracted much attention, let alone considered for integration in the development strategies; 21/

It was therefore expected of the institutions of higher learning in Africa to show greater interest in domestic activities. There was no language barrier if only they could put aside what Dr. Changula called their distancing themselves from rural and urban problems. In particular, because the theories of supply and demand and those of indifference curves can be profitably used to explain the emergence of so rapid a growth of what we call the parallel economy. If anything else, such research could help them operate more efficiently, leading eventually to expanding the nation's tax revenue base for the exchequer.

So far so good. Where and how therefore can these institutions be more productively rather than profitably used? There are several areas which can be considered as part and parcel in our search for possible solutions. For instance, research materials for thesis and doctoral dissertations could attempt to provide a basis for policy formulations on how to:

- (a) establish and maintain adequate commercial structures and rationally-organized marketing systems which are capable of sustaining high levels of domestic trade activities;
- (b) implement domestic trade by promoting related finance activities with a view to expanding the marketing of rural production;
- (c) streamline activities within the context, and control of or supervision of national public enterprises and/or co-operatives, especially the distribution networks in order to market rural products at remunerative prices rather than continuing to rely on middlemen;

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21/ It has now become an accepted fact that the best way to test the effectiveness of the laws of supply and demand in most African countries facing foreign exchange difficulties is to establish the range of imported items in the "parallel economies". For example, the Lagos Go-Slow, the Accra Mokola market stalls, sidewalk vendors etc.

- (d) establish flexible structures and design suitable programmes with a view to providing ongoing training for trade promotion and related information network;
- (e) utilize facilities made available by bodies like the development studies and research centres and the extra-mural departments, in particular, their providing training to indigenous business houses, executives of parastatals and government officials. More specifically, non-formal special short-term in-service trade promotion courses geared to specific domestic trade problems.

An underdeveloped domestic trade structure retards a nation's overall development strategy. It is therefore crucial that departments of economics in the institutions of higher learning in Africa should brace themselves fully in this area. Research in this area is naturally envisaged to be conducted on a complementary basis with production, distribution and financing aspects. The Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) states that "particular attention should be given to domestic trade and to improving the conditions ... so as to optimise its contributions to the socio-economic development of member States". 22/ The one thing I am not sure of is how many of these institutions have had time to seriously read and digest the LPA? It is by no means a perfect document. But at least an attempt has been made to address the issue by those who should know better that Africa's salvation can not be left to fairy gods of whatever piety.

Apathy to continental problems is Africa's main cause for our downfall. Had our institutions contributed to improving the domestic trade structures they would have helped facilitate arresting Africa's deteriorating socio-economic situations. In particular, the ones transmitted through international trade, a colonial economic legacy, which is long overdue for change. 23/ Institutions of higher learning in Africa should therefore resolutely and positively respond by indicating how domestic trade activities can help with economic development.

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22/ The Lagos Plan of Action, para. 249.

23/ See Ali Mazoni, The African Condition; the Reith Lectures Heinemann, London, 1980, p. 81.

(b) Intra-African Trade 24/

The concept of trade across African borders or intra-African trade is as old as the formation of statehood. The tendency in some quarters to deny the existence of boundaries prior to the colonial era only confirms a lack of knowledge about African history. Africa has seen the rise and fall of many kingdoms and empires. Hence, trade of the ancient Ashantis, the Zulus, the Ba Congo, the Amharas etc., with their neighbours long before the advent of colonialism is quite well documented by archaeologists and other historians. Time is too precious to go into proving the boundary issue. Rather, attention is to show how these African institutions can contribute to economic development through the instrumentality of promoting intra-African trade.

The concept of promoting intra-African trade is synonymous with that of collective self-reliance at the continental level. The rationale for multinational economic co-operation among developing countries is not the same as for or among the developed countries. In the latter case, it may be desirable, as pointed out by Bingu Wa Mutharika, in order to regulate the flow of certain goods and services. In developing countries on the other hand, it can be the only means by which to consolidate the usually small and fragmented economies into more viable units in their quest to accelerate the rate of economic development.<sup>25/</sup>

Promoting intra-African trade as a lubricant of the engine of economic development requires that attention is focused inter alia, on industrial development strategies, agricultural production, marketing and distribution and the region's food security. Similarly, ensuring the viability of Africa's transport networks and less dependence on external aid. Helping to resolve many of these issues is a task to which the institutions of higher learning can not afford to be found wanting <sup>26/</sup>. The African universities and colleges need little reminding that there is no merit in shrieking from genuine economic adventurism. These institutions and the people therein should feel free to quote or emulate theories propounded by outsiders during their search for solutions to African economic problems. The African intellectual can go abroad to ask for new knowledge and technical skills, raw material inputs and loans, but they should also be prepared to develop their traditional foreign ideologies. This is because Africa's future well-being in such an important field as trade cannot and should not be left to some fairy gods of whatever piety.

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<sup>24/</sup> A more detailed discussion of this topic can be found in my book, The Challenge of Developing Intra-African Trade, East African Literature Bureau, Nairobi, 1977.

<sup>25/</sup> B.W.T. Mutharika, Towards Multinational Economic Co-operation in Africa, Praeger, New York, 1972, pp. 20-27.

<sup>26/</sup> For example, many of Africa's current problems and vulnerability which are externally generated could be considerably lessened were intra-African trade activated.

Consequently, the study of intra-African trade ought to have been included in the economics syllabi in every African university and college of higher learning. It should have received comparable attention along side international trade course programmes. In this connection, the curricula and research could inter alia deal with:

(i) Trade Liberalization

Principally to help formulate possible policy options for wider multilateralization of trade. In other words, trade creation rather than total trade diversion in terms of supplies from other developing African countries. Policies of trade restrictions and import substitutions aiming to conserve foreign exchange tend to support the later rather than the former. Trade creation strategies resulting from research in these institutions could begin with an examination of existing bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral arrangements. Tariffs, non-tariff and paratariff measures can be examined from the same standpoint. The main aim being to create more trade thereby expand the scope of the resulting positive multiplier effects to the respective African economies.

(ii) Mechanisms and facilitating measures

Trade operators of intra-African trade are constrained by the lack of suitable mechanisms that answer to this approach. Consequently, resources should be used to study and formulate ways of minimizing the use of convertible currencies, a major constraint to expanding intra-African trade flows. And so can recourse to the across-the-board (linear) and/or product-by-product basis approach. Similarly, suggestions on establishing storage and conservation facilities at the national, subregional and regional levels. There is also the need to study the optimal and more efficient use of parastatals, now an established new phenomenon of most African economies. By harnessing these elements we could ensure that such other channels as the chambers of commerce and industry are brought into the main stream of intra-African trade transactions. Part of the same exercise is to identify through research programmes the goods and services taking account of the region's industrial structure. Similarly, where investment can give the highest return. In other words, giving a practical edge to the theory of factors of production and of supply and demand.

The response of African institutions of higher learning to aspects of promoting domestic and intra-African trade has been rather low-keyed. The situation can be improved with changes in the curricula, making provision for research that can produce policy recommendations and measures for the various levels and sectors of the African economies. In other words, focusing attention on long over due structural and institutional machinery changes and reshaping the process of economic development with a view to strengthening intra-African trade activities. New trade directives that strengthen the hand of intra-African trade would also strengthen African international trade potential and prosperity.

(c) Economic Co-operation among Development Countries (ECDC)

The process of economic growth and development is a sum total of several ingredients. Similarly, reactivating this process requires the mobilization of all resources and sectors including the contribution of institutions of higher learning. And yet the subject of trade exchanges has tended to be confined and not much broadened beyond the traditional lines. Domestic and intra-African trade on one hand and interregional trade within the context of ECDC on the other hand, have tended to be viewed as if they are the same side of a coin of non-traditional activities. Nonetheless, the Group of 77 meeting at Cartagena de Indias reiterated a certain conviction and stressed the importance of ECDC to economic development. It stated among other things that "The developing world will be the most dynamic force in the world economy in the next twenty years, if the right conditions can be created by the developing countries among themselves.<sup>27/</sup>

There can be no two different interpretations of the meaning of this message. In Africa like in other developing regions, it means establishing not only the benefits from such co-operation but also how to minimize losses. This is yet one fertile ground for research by the institutions of higher learning in Africa. Those that profess to teach and research in economics must feel the economic heart beat of the continent, which by all means, is the least developed, relative to others in the Third World. It therefore means using the research programmes and the teaching methods in these institutions to assist the African countries individually and collectively to derive benefits from large scale economies created through ECDC activities.

There are several areas in which these institutions can contribute with only slight modification to their current economics's syllabi. Interregional trade within the context of ECDC is similar to international trade. The subject of international economics stresses a number of complex issues which also are stressed in interregional trade. It tries to ensure a general equilibrium of allocation and exchange (micro-economics) with monetary and income adjustment (macro-economics). On the other hand, the price theory which is one other major determinant of international trade tends to concern itself with production and exchange of goods and services. <sup>28/</sup> These are the same paradigms which those dealing with the subject of ECDC must accommodate in the solutions put forward.

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<sup>27/</sup> "The Message from Cartagena de Indias", Bulletin, No. 21, Office of the Chairman of the Group of 77 in New York, September 1984, p. 1.

<sup>28/</sup> Charles P. Kindleberger, International Economics, Richard D. Irwin, Illinois, 1973, pp. 1-14.

#### IV. CONCLUDING OBSERVATION

The foregoing chapter has provided only a few of the areas which merit immediate action. There is nonetheless a body of opinion within Africa and outside which believes otherwise. It believes that any other course apart from the traditional ways of trade including the Lagos Plan of Action will not go beyond rhetoric and dramatic gestures. This would be true if the African continent was devoid of the necessary resources.

Developing Africa is a good example of a collection of countries with a wide variety of resources endowment that have yet to be economically exploited. A better and more efficient exploitation can considerably accelerate the region's rate of economic development. It can also facilitate efforts towards achieving a greater measure of self-reliance, nationally, subregionally, regionally and globally. It is therefore a task of finding ways of coming to grips with the issues of economic growth and development that becomes one of the biggest challenge to the institutions of higher learning in Africa.

Consequently, a major concern of the African institutions of higher learning must be to study the ways and means of how to promote and expand trade with a view to finding solutions to many of the paradoxes referred to briefly in the foregoing chapters. Furthermore, these institutions must be prepared to be innovative in their approach to the problems facing the African economies. The teaching and study of trade theories should aim at increasing the possibility of optimizing Africa's gains from continued involvement in international trade. At the same time, it should help strengthen trade at national, subregional, regional and interregional levels. Had North-South trade relations been a cure for Africa's deteriorating economic situation, Africa's membership in the Lome Convention would have led to increased export earnings and increased purchasing power. On the contrary, ACP exports to the EEC have declined. <sup>29/</sup>

The following areas are therefore suggested as needing action as part and parcel of development strategies. Institutions of higher learning in Africa should help with evolving strategies on:

- (i) possible commodity and geographical structure diversification, to include economic co-operation with other developing countries and countries of the centrally planned economies;

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<sup>29/</sup> See Jonathan H. Chileshe, "The Lome Conventions: Umbrella for Good Neighbourliness", Lome III: An Agenda for Africa, IDEP, Dakar, 6-7 July 1984.

- (ii) measures to control or contain the activities of middlemen, especially the transnational co-operations (TNCs);
- (iii) recommendations on setting up new trading regimes and bargaining techniques and strategies.

It would be naive though, to expect that Africa's future prosperity will be realized or will not just because these institutions do not render their appropriate support. Their commitment and contribution is indeed crucial and should be an integral part of the total national activities. However, it is possible to presume that had these institutions played an innovative role in the trade area, developing Africa would possibly not have had its share of the world's timber market diminished. Nor would Asia have overtaken Africa as principal supplier. That this has happened is partly due to inadequate policies pursued by certain African producers in those very countries where these institutions have distanced themselves from collective action to needed action. Other examples can be cited to impress upon these African institutions about the need to modify rather than totally change their teaching of economics.

What is needed therefore is a greater degree of transparency about intentions and actions between the Government's economic arms and the departments of economics in the institution of higher learning in Africa. The mutuality of interest may have been recognized but the wall of suspicion and defence of territorial ground tends to retard, rather than contribute to ameliorating Africa's deteriorating social and economic situations.