



UNITED NATIONS
Economic Commission for Africa

**SENIOR POLICY WORKSHOP
ON THE THEME
" STRENGTHENING THE VIABILITY
OF THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY
IN THE 1990s AND BEYOND "**

**Mbabane, Swaziland
25 - 29 May, 1992**

Organized by the Public Administration, Human Resources and Social Development Division, within the framework of the Special Action Programme for Administration and Management in Africa-Regional Project (SAPAM), in collaboration with the **University of Swaziland** and the **Association of African Universities (AAU)**,
Mbabane, Swaziland

UN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICAN
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, HUMAN RESOURCES
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES.

PAPER PRESENTED TO

THE SENIOR POLICY WORKSHOP ON THE THEME:
"STAFF RETENTION, COST RECOVERY SCHEMES AND PRIVATE"
FINANCING OF UNIVERSITIES

MAY 25-29, 1992

MBABANE, SWAZILAND

**THE PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN AFRICA: WHAT
LESSONS AND ROLE IN THE 1990s and BEYOND**

PROF.

A. ABU ZAYD

VICE-CHANCELLOR

OMDURMAN AHLIA UNIVERSITY.

INTRODUCTION

The economic crisis in Africa has a devastating effect on the African University even as Africans and their governments are demanding more of their Universities in terms increased enrollment and attention to social and economic concerns.

Available budgetary and enrollment figures point to a serious situation. Cherished African beliefs of equity and democratization of society are interpreted in terms of unrestricted access to higher education. This run-away expansion in higher education is brought about by the requirements of a modernized society where advances in the economy and Industry require highly qualified man-power. But political pressures and parental aspirations of seeing their children receiving the same opportunities as they themselves have had apply significant pressure on the governments either to expand the intake of students or build new Universities as in the case of Sudan. This trend for expansion was emphasized in many of the papers presented to the Nov. 1991 UNESCO/AAU Accra Seminar on "Governance and Management" in African Universities. The figures quoted

¹
by one paper illustrate these facts;

" In the less developed regions "enrollment" increased from 8.9% to 12.3% between 1975 and it is expected to be 15.1% by the year ⁷ 2000 .".LS1

Dr. Galal further makes this point clearer;

" This means that from 1975 to 2000, the 18-23 age group will increase in the more developed regions from 33.4 Million to 41 Million where it will increase in the less developed regions from 19.6

Million to 64.4 Million." ³

1. Galal, Abdel Fatah, "Towards Efficiency In Higher Education" case study No. 6 p.3

2. Ibid

Previously The University has changed. The elite corner has new clients Dr. Frederico Mayor agrees;

" As post-secondary admissions approach or exceed 20 percent of the relevant age chart in many industrialized and certain developing countries attaining more than double that figure in the United States, we move closer to a situation of⁴ mass-higher education."

World UNESCO statistics dramatized these percentages;

" In 1960, the total students enrollment in higher-education institutions the World was 13 million it is estimated that it will become⁵ 105 million by the year 2000". .LS1

But this expansion in numbers was not Matched by a conditionally significant increase in resources, facilities and recruitment of teachers to cater for the explosion of enrolled not to speak of facilities for added on social and economic concerns and search or what is commonly called "Relevance".

The Threat

Increased numbers or universal access to university education pose Threat to the very function of The University. It endangers "quality". Finances and facilities are necessary for

-
3. Ibid
 4. Frederico Mayor, Director-General, UNESCO in a speech delivered to the 6th General Conference of The International Association of Universities, Helsinki, 6 Aug. 1990., P.4
 5. Balal Abdel Fatah, op.cit p. 2 (6)F Mayor, op.cit.

quality training and teaching. Not responding to the demands for universal access to higher-education violates the ideals of The African " Revolution", of equity and democratization. The economic situation calls for curbs on Public expenditure including the Universities. Equity and democratization are essential for avoiding exclusion, racism and regionalism...i.e. essential for national Unity. Bangladesh was much a creation of the relevant of the Dacca University Students and faculty as of other political, economic and social factors working for the destruction of a United Pakistan at the time. If the results are not that dramatic at least what we may call the Kinshasa syndrome will obtain. Dr. Galal gives this example from the University of Kinshasa:

" Each school day students arrive for the first class at 4 a.m in order to reserve a seat. At 6 O'clock the 250 seat amphitheater (60 seats are already out Use) are crammed with most of 750 students registered for the class which begins at a.m"

Obviously, The University of Kinshasa does not have The Potentialities and financial resources available to meet the increase in numbers. The "Kinshasa Syndrome" is in fact an African University Malaise. Ibadan University finishes this Mural with The following details;

" For several month now we have been expected to run a physics laboratory without water and get accurate readings from microscopes blinded by use and age. Chemicals are Unimaginably short. The result of all this is a chemistry laboratory that cannot produce distilled water and hundreds of "science graduates" lacking the benefit of practi-

6

cal demonstration , "at the University of Science And Technology, no equipment for the electrical engineering department has been purchased since

7

1962)."

The professors relating there stories from Nigeria and Ghana could be talking in Khartoum, Nairobi or Lusaka. The situation is similar in all African campuses. Budget cuts and financial

retrenchment through the 70s and the 80s and currently have seriously undermined The African University. A study undertaken by the AAU indeed shows the majority of the universities studied performing satisfactorily. This, however, as professor ONWUMBCHILI suggests, is due to prudence in allocation and management of scarce

8

resources. We have not yet heard of an African University not being able to pay salaries. However, non-salary operating expenses and capital investment were seriously curtailed.

THE AFRICAN UNIVERSITY - WHITHER

The dilemma of the African university in the current economic crisis is manifold. Any of these relates to Finance and facilities, without which, severe stress is laid on the mission and operations of the university. But what is the university in the Modern African Situation? What is its mission, goals and function in society and particularly in the African society at its present stage of development?

These are important questions to ask; more so now than at anytime before when Africa is approaching the end of the century with little material progress to show and with The African University in a bad situation.

When they wrote their model for the African University,

9

the Authors of, Creating The African University, saw the mission of the university as follows:

1. Pursuit, promotion, and dissemination of knowledge.
2. research.
3. Provision of intellectual leadership.
4. Manpower Development.
5. Promoting social and economic modernization.
6. Promoting intercontinental unity and international understanding.

8. Galal Abdel Fatah; op. p. 5

9. T.M. YESFU (ed), Creating The African University, Emerging Issues Of The 1970s Ibadan, Association of African Universities and Oxford University Press (1973).

Almost twenty years later African Vice-chancellors and academics meeting in Accra between 25-29 Nov.1991

10

considered The following to be the mission of the University in Africa:

1. The training of high level specialists in all areas necessary for national development.
2. The endogenous development of science and technology.
3. The safeguard of cultural identity and the promotion of culture.
4. The improved functioning of the education system as a whole.

The mission and function of the African University has changed considerably with new concerns added up to its mission because the changing local, national and, international context is positing new needs and requirements.

There is need for the university continuously to reassess its mission with reference to the local and the international imperatives. Although Universities are "situation - Specific" as Professor Onwumehili prefers to say. They are international by virtue of their use of the common language of reason and science. The African University understood this relationship between the need to be rooted in ones culture and tradition and being a member of the international community of academics. This clarity of mission and function has been possible in the days of sound economies and abundance of funds; local and foreign. The university in Africa, today, suffers from deprivation shortages that render even the most essential function; teaching; impossible. It is increasingly impossible to speak of the function of the university in Africa without a deep sense of inadequacy. With insufficient finances and inadequate facilities the Public University is experimenting with new ways and means to mobilize previously Untaped resources. Success in this is not encouraging because of the way the public University is legally and administratively structured. Govern-

10. The Legon Statement on The Mission Of The African University, Legon Nov. 25-29, 1991.

ments in Africa will continue to support the Public University' but with reduced budgets which in turn will render The Public Universitys' capacity to expand enrollment doubtful or even lacking. The search for new cost sharing schemes is underway. The search for the private African University has begun.

THE PRIVATE AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL UNIVERSITY

The Sudan provides interesting ventures in higher education with the founding of the private or non-governmental University. Until 1976 Sudan had only one university. The University of Khartoum, itself a creation of colonial times was a university for the lucky few. Hundreds other students found places either in the post-secondary institutions including the military college or simply joined the workforce. Political and social pressures, however and the needs of the modern state made the single university undenable even as it expanded curollment. The pressure to admit more students was simply too great. The settlement of the first Sudanese civil war 1954-1972 provided for the establishment of a regional university in the capital city of Juba in Southern Sudan, to train manpower for the new Government and to accelerate development. Another, Gezira University was thought necessary to cope with the dramatic increase in general

11

education which the socialist regime of General Nimeri triggered. Juba and Gezira Universities were opened in 1977 and 1978 respectively. The first intake for each of these two new universities did not exceed 200 students. Until 1989 these figures did not increase appreciably. The two University could not help Khartoum University as parents and politicians clamoured for increased access to the University. Gezira and Juba Universities were said to be the answers to many problems, chief among which was wider access to higher education. However, these were

12

Post-Petrol - Crisis creations when many third-world economies were badly hit by staggering oil bills and Massive increases in the prices of finished goods from the industrialized world. Africa's economy are still

12. 1973 was the year when OPEC announced dramatic increases in the prices of petrol products thereby ending the cheap energy era. Price rocked everywhere. Sudan oil bill jumped from US\$ 30 million to US\$ 400 million annually.

suffering from the 1973 oil crisis. Through the 1970s and 1980s Sudan's economy was suffering from another blow; the Debt-Servicing Crisis. The Nimir Regime embarked upon an ambitious development program and was tempted by the ease with which finance was available in the international money circles. Badly conceived projects foundered and the debt had to be repaid.

The Sudanese economy collapsed and with it the collapse of all services was certain. Money was in short supply. The tempting trick of printing more money resulted in a run-away inflation. The Universities could not escape the quagmires. Juba and Gezira Universities could not develop as there was no finance. Sudanese students took to going to Universities overseas and particularly to Egypt, India and Eastern Europe. Many others went to Western European countries, the United States and Latin America. This

13

massive student migration required financing.

14

US\$250 Million were transferred by Sudanese Banks annually to support those students in foreign universities. Sudanese Universities' capacity to admit students shrank further as the number of school leavers doubled. Only 10% of the more than 150,000 secondary school graduates found access to higher education. A number of local and international committees were formed by the National Council For Higher Education (NICHE) to find a way to relieve the situation.

The need for more finances and facilities was recommended. Difficult choices were presented to the Government, including the abolition of subsidies, free lodging, feeding, and transportation. These were political hot potatoes and the government could not implement the recommendations because the Sudanese students' movement is among the continent's best organized, politicized and

13. Figure varies as to how many students are studying abroad today. But the figure often quoted is 25,000.

14. M.O. Besheir: OMDURMAN AHLIA UNIVERSITY: A new venture in Higher Education in SUDAN, 1991, P.5.

(15)

most violent. The Government decided instead upon four more universities in four Regional Capitals. Professor Mohammed Omer Bashir writes about this situation;

" The national universities, including the recently established universities of Gezira and Juba, were unable to admit more students because of the limited resources available. The annual financial allocations to the universities and to the other institutions of higher education were hardly sufficient for their requirements of free feeding, free residence, free textbooks.... various reports were made by international commissions invited by the Government.

Some viewed Sudanese national Universities as Ivory Towers divorced from Sudanese realities and negative in their policies and entrenched in the British traditional system of higher .

The Community and individuals. Others viewed them as unable to focus in their and training on problem solving and skills which will make them capable of playing

(16)

a productive and positive role in nation-building.

The most brutal Criticism, was the proposal to "develop

(17)

new models in structure and curricula . The ground was paved for new venture

-
15. That was a directive from the President of The Republic to the -Then- Secretary General of (NICHE). I was then (1982) The Secondary - General, a position which I held until 1985 when I went to establish the OMDURMAN AGLIA UNIVERSITY, A privately funded University.
 16. M.O. Beshir: OMDURMAN AHLIA UNIVERSITY.
 17. Op. cit., Ibid.

TRADITIONAL ANSWERS - EFFECTIVE RESPONSE.

The government could not adapt any of the proposals made to reform the Universities and the rest of the higher education system. The government had its hands tied....There was simply no money; be it local or foreign. A group of academics saw in the various proposals made to remedy the situation, waste of time and effort. They saw in the Sudanese movement for voluntary education a possible answer.

Ahli Education:

The voluntary movement of education known as (al - Ta'alim al - Ahli) or non-government education dates back to the turn of the century. Traditionally, education in Sudan has always been a non-governmental activity. Throughout recorded history and during the periods of the various sultanates and emirates, educating the young took place in the mosque or in the Quranic school (Khalwa). These institutions of learning were voluntary efforts. The history of Islamic Education even at the time of the great empires was voluntary activity financed and organized by the community who wanted their children educated in the religious sciences. From the 16th century on until the British conquest of the Sudan in 1898 and the abolition of the Mahdist State, education was a non-governmental activity. The Quranic school and the mosque learning circles (Halagat) continued after the conquest. They exist today. The coming of the British, however, brought with it new kinds of schools; with a modern curriculum. The modern school was organized differently and its graduates were meant to serve the new British administration. Graduates of these new schools were different clothes and spoke English. They had money and people differed to them.

The modern school was difficult to enter into. One had to be the son of tribal chief or a member of the new administration. This was an "elite" school. Graduating from it ensured employment, prosperity and respect. The British built only a few of these schools.... enough to ensure a flow of clerks, store managers and accountants. There was no need to educate more than necessary. In any case, Sudanese saw in this school a danger. They did not seek admission

so it because of imagined threat of conversion to Christianity. Wise men saw things differently. They saw the whole thing as a colonial conspiracy. The British did not want to educate the Sudanese in the modern sciences, they guessed. Further, they believed. The British Administration, through its policy of employing only, the graduates of its schools, wanted to show that there was no future in traditional Islamic Education.

Sensitive men like Babikir Badri saw the danger of not being able to educate the young in the modern schools. He applied in 1907 to the Governor of the Blue Nile Province for permit to establish a school for his own daughters and Grand daughters (Ahfad) in his own house. The Governor objected on the ground that educating girls will invite violence among the Muslim population. What the Governor feared, probably, was Babiker Badri's background as a fighter in the Mahdist army. Eventually the school was opened in Babikir Badri's own house in the small village of Rufa'a on the east bank of the (19)

Blue Nile. The Ahfad was later moved to the city of Omdurman, the former war camp of the Mahdist Revolution. The school which later, during World War two developed into a secondary school for women was self-supporting and received financial support from individuals and philanthropists (20)

We had to wait Until 1927 for a similar school for boys to be established in Omdurman through the voluntary efforts of citizens. Difficult negotiations went on between the men who led the effort and the department of education. Numerous conditions were set by the department before the permit was granted. Wealthy Omdurman Citizens joined the effort and "Omdurman Ahlia Intermediate school" was founded. Like Ahfad, the Ahlia Intermediate School developed into a secondary .

-
18. A prominent Sudanese educator who founded the first non-governmental school for girls in 1907 and called it the Ahfad School which developed into the first University for women, Ahfad University For Women at Omdurman. The story of the Ahfad is documented in his auto-biography TARIKH HAYATI
 19. M.O Beshir, Op. cit P.1.
 20. See Ibid.

school at Omdurman. A prominent member of the group, colonel Ogail, wrote at the time of inauguration that he wished to see, before he died, an Ahlia University established through the voluntary efforts of citizens. The success of these voluntary groups in Omdurman inspired a mass movement of voluntary activity for education through the 1940s and 1950s. A national movement known as "Harakat al - Ta'alim al - Ahli or the Movement for Voluntary Education swept through Sudanese towns and Villages. The Graduate Congress, a nationalist Organization formed, in 1936 by Sudanese graduates who struggled for Sudanese independence from Britain spearheaded the efforts. A day for NON - GOVERNMENTAL EDUCATION (Youm al-Ta'alim - al - Ahli) was designated for mobilizing funds from citizens for building schools at all levels and for both boys and girls. This was to counter British foot - dragging in building schools. Vocational training and specialized religious education received attention. Colonel Ogail's wish to see a non - governmental Universities (Ahlia University) established through non- governmental effort had to wait until 1986.

OMDURMAN AHLIA UNIVERSITY

The concept of a non - governmental University, known in Arabic as, "Gama'a Ahlia", remained alive in the hearts of men. In 1982 a group of academicians, businessmen and intellectuals met to discuss the crisis in higher education and the possibility of a role for private efforts. Popular efforts in non-governmental education were recalled with admiration and enthusiasm. The group agreed with the general indictment of the public Universities. Something has to be done. An Ahlia University was needed. Omdurman, being a city founded by the Mahdi and where the nationalist movement began and where the Graduates Congress which led the struggle for independence was headquartered and where the voluntary education movement was born, was a good place to establish an Ahlia University. Immediately, plans for establishing a privately - funded university were laid. In 1985, I was invited to lead the effort as vice - chancellor designate.

PLANNING A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

Central to the effort to build a private University in Sudan was a number of assumptions:

1. give citizens an opportunity to participate in educating their children.
2. Overcome the difficult financial situation in which the public universities find themselves in.
3. Devise a cost-sharing scheme which will ensure the healthy growth of the University without burdening parents and students.
4. Provide access to university to more people.
5. Train more skilled manpower to plug the gap created by the severe brain - drain of the 1970s and early 1980s.
6. Provide a national alternative to the study abroad.
7. Respond to the needs of the nation and the individual.
8. Offer a curriculum that is rooted in Sudanese realities but attuned to the changing international imperatives.
9. Link research to teaching to ensure good service to the community.
10. Pay attention to the general education of the graduate especially in Sudanese cultures and values.
11. Create a flexible legal, administrative and financial structure to respond effectively and efficiently to every need, including academic and enrollment needs.

These assumptions which the Ahlia University buliders were considering emerged from the numerous criticisms to which the university in Sudan was subjected; its mission, aims, goals, its intellectual and scientific leadership and its axiological functions.²² Moral, ethical and social questions were raised. Can the university abdicate its role in addressing the issues of the day such as the civil war, the displaced millions because of war and drought, the bloated bellies of small children, the deterioration of the environment human rights, democracy and the the construction of civil society. In short, the Sudanese university was in a crisis and it had difficulty adapting itself to the required change. It had no answer to the criticism. Further, the political instability in the country deprived the Public university of Sudan of stable leadership. The average term of a vice-chanecllor was two years in the decade of the 1980s. Some vice-chancellors served no more than a few months of the usually four year term. The office of the "leader of leaders",²³ as professor A. Sawyer calls it, was rendered ineffectual for more than a decade. The public University suffered from this instability of leadership considerably as no meaningful change could be initiated or brought to bear on the functions of the university. change was not only difficult, it was not allowed to take place.

22. Iba der Thiam; The Missions of the African University..., Study case No. 3, UNESCO/AAU Seminar, Accra, Nov. 1991, P.3.

23. Prof. A. Sawyer : Leadership And Organization of African Universities, case study No. 4, UNESCO/AAU Seminar, Accra Nov. 1991, P. 22

Organizing the University:-

The planners of Omdurman Ahlia University had to work in this atmosphere of crisis an atmosphere of desperately needed change in the way universities functioned.

The realization that university management differed from one country to the other was welcome as it gave planners the opportunity to break away from the entrenched British tradition of organizing the university; a chance to experiment with new structures which are responsive, flexible and efficient but exhibiting common features with other universities. There were conceptual features which no university could afford to neglect and which must constantly be borne in mind as we ponder the issues confronting the university in a modern society. What was basically required of a university as the builders of Omdurman Ahlia University saw was three things:

- a. Professional training.
- b. Education of the whole man.
- c. Research.

But this essential mission was to be linked to the social function of the university which is expressed in:-

- a. Relevance of the curricula.
- b. University autonomy.
- c. Academic freedom.
- d. Mass higher education.

This can be ensured fully if the university is in control of its curricula, organization and financial matters. Full autonomy is contingent on accountability to none other than the university's own authorities.

The mixed group of academicians, businessmen and others who gathered to plan for building the university sat within this context to design the curriculum and financial and administrative structures of the new university. The atmosphere was not encouraging. The Nimeri regime viewed some of the founders with suspicion. If they were not outright members of the opposition working hard to overthrow the regime, they were at least not loyal to it. Such people could only build a university whose students will only be openly against Nimeri and his regime.

The government was angered by the fact that it was not consulted or even invited to the discussions. It felt irrelevant. How could people gather to build a university, do so without the government help or at least its blessings. The government's hostility was felt at every moment. This scenario was not played to the full. The regime was overthrown by a popular uprising in April 1985. Multiparty politics were introduced and democratic elections were announced within a year. The atmosphere changed. The new University could now apply for land and for permission to operate. Nobody, however was sure of where to apply. This was the first time a non-governmental university was to be established. Usually the President announced the founding of a new university. Somebody, then, wrote a charter. The President signed the charter and the university was "official"; legitimate. But this is the case of a public university.

Who will "announce" the a non-governmental university? Who will give it a charter? As the founders

were pondering this issue of how a non-governmental university is legitimized and chartered, someone thought of the National Council For Higher Education. A request to issue a charter was sent to its newly-appointed secretary-general whose only knowledge of universities was that he went to one as an undergraduate. The secretary-general raised many problems and questions. Some questions were reasonable but some of the problems raised were born out fear to confront this new creation which the NICHE did not encounter throughout its existence even as somewhere in its laws it seems empowered with the "authorization" of the establishment of non-governmental and Foreign Universities. The scope of this "authorization" was not clear but it was satisfactory to the founders of Omdurman Ahlia University.

At last they found a government agency to deal with even as its secretary-General seemed perverse to the new venture. The government's land and Housing Department was pleased with the idea of a non-governmental University. They responded to the founder's request for land by granting the new University 40 acres of choice land within the city of Omdurman . That land was worth 40 million Sudanese pounds.. a substantial amount of money. Two different responses from within the same government.

The founders decided to neglect the NICHE and its secretary-general and proceed with the plans. A centrally located office was donated by a businessman in the heart of Khartoum, Journalists were invited to a briefing. They have found something different from the dreary political party news. for years, thereafter, their favourite subject was the new idea and the men behind it. Television and Radio were not to be left out of the exciting news. A non-governmental University was a marvellous idea. They wanted

to know how it was going to be different from the public Universities; how it will be administered ; what type of curriculum will it offer ; where will the money come from; will its students come from the rich classes; what will its role in society be? The wide publicity attracted men and women concerned with higher education . Academecians who were not invited to participate were not happy. The businessmen who were approached to fund projects were happy to do so. Politicians sent messengers to see if they were invited to any announced fund-raising function. The Prime Minister decided the government should forego the land rates, a considerable sum of money and that he personally will organize efforts to build a lecture hall to bear the Mahdi's name. The secretary-general at the NICHE thought it prudent to keep his peace. the new University was born with some fanfare. It was not wise to antagonize its founders . Nobody in Higher Education could antagonize them beneficially.

Structuring The Administration

In his excellent paper presented to the legon Seminar on Government and Management in Africa ,²⁴ Prof A. Sawyer, Vice-chancellor of the University of Ghana, says, " Universities are established by, and derive their authority to operate from, either charter or legislation. Typically such charter or law will lay out in very general terms the legal status, the broad objects, the principal organs of the institution and their functions and powers. This general charter or statutory provisions, supplemented by implementing regulations and conventions, constitute the legal framework of the typical University , and the

24. Accra- legon , Nov. 25 -29 ,1991.

general character of its relationship to the other organs of state and the world outside the University."²⁵

Having met with various difficulties from the " secretary-general of the NCHE , the founders or "Board of Trustees" of Omdurman Ahlia University (OAU). decided to " author" their own "law" and implementing regulations . The structure they created for their University differed from that of the almost- identical law of the public Universities.

The Council:

This is the governing body of the University. The law describes the function of the council as follows: " The council overseas the administration of the University. It lays out the general policy for admission, curriculum and the granting of academic awards and honorary degrees encouraging research and the laying of the general policy for establishing departments, schools, colleges, centres and institutes ²⁶

Whereas in public Universities, the council is made up of non-University people, the O.A.U council is made up as follows: ²⁷

- 1- The chancellor of the University
- 2- The vice-chancellor
- 3- The Directors of colleges, institutes and centres
- 4- The director of Administrative and Financial affair, (secretary to council)

25. Op. Cit P. 9-10 .

26. Omdurman Ahlia University , "Nizam ASASI" or " Organic law" Jan.1990 edition .

27. ibid

- 5- Director of studies.
- 6- The librarian.
- 7- Secretary for Administrative affairs.
- 8- director of students affairs.
- 9- Coordinators (deans) of programmes.
- 10- Director of Finance.
- 11- Ten members from the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee.
- 12- Three members of proven interest in University and higher education.

A number of Committees and councils were formed to implement the goals and aims of the University :

- 1- Students Affairs council , (SAC).
- 2- Library Committee.
- 3- Academic Board.
- 4- Vice-chancellor's Committee.
- 5- Standing (Administrative) Committee.

Three other important bodies were created:

- 1- the Executive Committee : created by the Board of Trustees, this Committee acts on behalf of the Board of Trustees in its absence. It has a large number of members.. twenty five. It meets regularly to discuss mainly financial matters
- 2- The Academic Council : Chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, this council acts as a University senate, It includes in its membership, in addition to the programme coordinators (deans), some senior staff and five well known academicians from other Universities.
- 3- The Students welfare Council : This council is important in a fee-paying University as it supervises the Students fund whose function is to accept donations from Philanthropists, businessmen, banks etc. to

pay the needy students' fees and to help them in many other ways.

The council is responsible for students cultural, sports, social and general welfare. At the programme level, smaller committees are formed to discuss departmental and programme academic and financial requirements. these matters are then, sent to the appropriate higer levels. such decentralized structure is created to involve the maximum number of University staff in the decision-making. the structure, however, reflect, the adminsitration's main concern; finance. Top administrators are members of every board and committee to ensure reasonable financial decisions and general economic austerity. Those academic decisions requiring substantial financial outlay are generally referned to the vice-chancellor for help. Request for the vice-chancellor's interference in some financial decisions is not an insvitation for him to take an arbitrary decision but rather because he is first among equals and because he is assumed to be more persuasive with the Exective Committee. Equality and persuation are necessary in a private University. They are essential for effective and harmonious relations with the Public on whose good will the Private University depends. The Public sometimes supports the Private University for reasons other than philanthropy . The African government has simply ground to a halt in the eyes of many Africans. It has become an example for inefficency and tardines. people feel insulted and terribly disappointed by this behavior. Supporting an efficient non-governmental institution becomes a statement.

This attitude is expressed in donations and words. the Private University becomes an alternative to the state institutional collapse .

Financing the Ahlia University:

We have seen above how the organizational structure of Omdurman Ahlia University reflects, in part, the main concern of the Administration; finance. This is not to say that the academic side to the University is left to chance.

In fact, the whole structure emphasizes novelty in governance and academic offering. The programme of study is designed in a way to offer subjects which are not featured in the Public Universities' programmes, either because of their inability to respond to the changing needs of society or because of their cumbersome and slow decision-making process. A Professor at Khartoum University expressed this State of affairs by remarking that, "it would take years for Khartoum University to decide whether a subject should be offered. Whereas, Omdurman Ahlia University can make such decision within months."²⁸ The decision on how to finance Omdurman Ahlia University was made earlier. A consensus developed among the members of the Board of Trustees to depend on three sources of finance:

- a) students' fees.
- b) Donations from the general public, and particularly from rich individuals both inside and outside the country.
- c) The international Donor Community.
This group was assigned the task of providing foreign currency and/or equipment.

The British Council was such donor who was interested in the library and funding the establishment of the

28. Prof. A. El-makk, in a private conversation with the author recently after his visit to the Ahlia University.

University's, English language department . DANIDA was impressed by the Environmental Studies Programme . They provided funds for the running costs and the building of the programmes facilities. The Government of lower Saxony in the Federal Republic of Germany, offered to equip the Interior Design Programme with expensive workshops. Sudanese working in Abu Dhabi were interested in the University laboratories.

The American Sudanese Association provided thousands of books in Management, Economics, Sciences, etc. Princess Suad El-Sabbah of Kuwait donated funds for building and equipping the Computer Centre. Prince Hassan bin Talal, the Crown Prince of the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan donated money for the general administration.

The Canadian government, through C.I.D.A , donated money for the library. Obviously the decision to invite International Donors was wise.

Following the time-honoured tradition of the private education movement in Sudan, the building programme in the new campus was to be financed by a general appeal for public donations . It was decided that the best way to do this was to invite certain individuals. They were offered the chance to build lecture halls, the library, certain University centres, e.g. the Health sciences centre, which will then be named after them or after relative they would wish to commemorate. This was received well. people liked the idea of seeing their names on lecture halls doors in Universities. They had the money and wished to have the prestige.

There are many things money cannot buy. It certainly can buy a name plaque in a private University provided their money was earned in legitimate business and their own characters were without blemish. The University was able in

this manner to build all the halls, centres, offices, utilities and the library in phase one of its plans. Phase two, which is to begin next December, will be built by the same funding methods. It should be possible; especially when the number of buildings needed is not as many as in phase one .

The third source of finance, the students' fees, raises many problems. Fees provide the funds for the running costs of the University, salaries and services. Paying for University education in Africa is controversial. Sudanese are familiar with paying fees for general education in the private system of education. They also know that Ahfad University for Women charges fees. Parents and students resisted all government attempts to charge some University fees for some services provided such as lodging or feeding. The resistance was sometimes violent and ended up in the closure of the Universities for weeks or months. Certain political parties (when party-politics were allowed) accused those who thought the student must share the cost as being undemocratic and elitist because the poor will not be able to pay. The Sudanese Communist Party (S.C.P.) was particularly critical of the Ahlia University when it was opened. Students, however, were pleased to find a seat in a Sudanese Private University These students normally would go to universities overseas. At the time the Ahlia University was opened, the Sudanese currency (the pound) was devalued greatly . From 3 dollars to every Sudanese pound in the late 1960s. the pound was devalued to 40 pounds to the dollar in 1986. Today 93 Sudanese pound equal one US dollar . Students calculate that they could join the newly opened University at home and study at a fraction of what they will pay to the foreign University. Parents were pleased with both the cost and the guarantee

that their children will not be subjected to the negative influences of foreign living and alienation. Mothers saw the University as a great friend of the family. Their daughters do not have to go to Madras to get a degree in business studies.

The government grudgingly admired the success of the private University and when it realized that citizens were willing to share costs, announced through its Higher Education Revolution Policy (HER), its readiness to grant permits to any citizen or group of citizens who wished to open a private University. A Committee, known as the Committee For Private And Foreign Higher Education, was formed within the NICHE to regulate the opening of non-governmental colleges. The Fees at Omdurman Ahlia University are adjusted periodically to reflect price increases. Fees, however, still are below what many parents pay in some private schools.

Problems of Running The Private University:

The major problem experienced in running a Private University is staff retention. Public Universities have the government to adjust their budgets through sudden government salary increases. A private University cannot do that beyond certain limits as the fees are structured to cover a carefully designed budget. Any extra-budgetary measures cause frantic search for funds. Last year salaries were adjusted three times by the government; more adjustments are expected this year in the government salaries. Staff at OAU expect to see these salary increases reflected in their pay-check at the end of the month.

The establishment of six new public Universities and

four private ones creates a better market for experienced teachers whose threats to move over to another, better-paying University are now taken seriously by administrators. In the case of OAU they proved to be not empty threats in a few cases including highly qualified accountants.

Another important problem in Sudan is the Government's insistence that foreign diplomats should not deal directly with the Universities which robs the private University of excellent opportunities to follow up on good promises to finance projects. Another, equally disadvantageous government policy, is the insistence that private Universities must submit any request for a foreign government or International and Regional Agencies' assistance through the Ministry of National Planning only to be told the request does not fall within the government's list of priorities and therefore, could not be supported. The Vice-Chancellor's eloquent appeal for assistance with the Ambassador falls victim and the Ambassador who was impressed by the excellent document and the charm of the University engineer is disappointed as he was serious in his promise to help.

Discipline in the Private University :

A tendency among some private University students that they will somehow graduate because they paid substantial fees, is a serious matter which causes many disciplinary problems. It has taken Omdurman Ahlia University (O.A.U) considerable efforts to instill in those students a realization that fee-paying is not an easy passport to a University degree, Quiet a few students had to repeat the year or be dismissed before they realized they were in a

"real" University . Rich female students thought a private university is where you go to land a good husband. They thought they could repeat as many years as long as they paid the fees. That attitude took some doing before those students found out that their stay in the university was contingent on their hard work at the library.

Attraction of the private University:

The Private University offers some attractions which the public University lacks. In the last ten years, public Universities in Sudan were closed 50% of the time because of students riots against the university or the government or because the students committed acts of violence against each other usually over Student Union issues. The general deterioration of the university , collapse of discipline, mass-staff-drain, degradation of life on the campus and environment , lack of equipment in laboratories, classrooms and libraries and the constant University complaint that it had no funds to improve on anything or service ; all this led to a general disrespect for the institution, its leadership and to learning . The result was protracted instability. Some students graduate in seven or eight years instead of the usual four or five. This year, most public Universities will have three batches of first year students because nobody finished the year to be examined and promoted for three years. They were always on strike. The Private University is quiet. The longest OAU was closed, was ten days when the students quarrelled over how to run elections for new Union officers.

This stability of the Private University attracts students from public Universities because they find better education and graduate in time. Another attraction is the

curriculum. Most OAU graduates find Jobs within months of graduation whereas eight thousand Public University graduates have been waiting for Jobs for years. The O.A.U curriculum is designed to produce employable graduates. Part of the training process at O.A.U is to send students annually to banks, companies, engineering firms etc. to do a summer holiday training annully and produce a report from the bank or firm about his or her performance signed by the manager. By the time they graduate, they are usually well-know where they seek a employment and practically know their Job adequately.

There is an atmosphere of collegiality at OAU which public universities lack . The campus at the public University is poisoned by politics and students and staff are so polarized that common civilities between colleagues seem a burden.

O.A.U is the only compus where students of both sexes prefer to spend their holiday socializing. Staff at OAU spend extra efforts to know their students well. Excellent relations have developed this way. Staff serve as tutors to groups of students which builds bridges of trust.

Lessons to be learnt:

Creating a Private University is not An impossible undertaking. Provided it starts small and then develops, the private University can succeed to a great degree.

Using the African concept of self-reliance intellegently, a Private University can build on the citizens' good will to establish the University.

Sucess of the Private University is contingent on a number of factors:

- 1 - Flexible Administrative structure, to ensure responseto the changing needs of society and the student and to ensure efficiency.
- 2 - A curriculum that caters for the students needs and is practically-oriented. the curriculum must also see society's needs. The modern University in Africa should accept the training of middle level cadres as a legitimate university business. Society needs more of this level of manpower.
- 3 - In an age of mass Higher Education, a good department of Continuous Education provides excellent community service and wider access to higher education .
- 4 - Involving the general public closely in the financial efforts of the University yields fascinating results. The general public is a financial source that never dries. The Public gives generously to support well-conceived ideas. The Public is tired of the Public University's in effeciency and does not view its graduates with the same affection as it did before.
- 5 - One of the policies of Omdurman Ahlia University is to suggest that a donor brings his own contractor, builders and workers to do a Job according to University specifications. this builds trust, and ensures that the exact amount of money needed for the building or project will be provided in these times of run-away inflation. This way, it is very unlikely that any charges of corruption will fly about.
- 6 - The University is both local and international in character. It is a Joint venture of men and women of good will from all countries. International donors are indispensable.

7 - Citizens of the same country working abroad are an excellent source of funding. They understand the constraints and have access to information on sources of finance in their countries of residence.

The University is the appropriate institution that is able to place " education , science and culture at the very top of national priorities"²⁹.

They play a key role in the " generation, transfer and application of new knowledge"³⁰. That is where professional, technical and managerial staff necessary for socio-economic development are produced.

Universities are too serious a business to be left to governments alone.

29. Mayor , F., op. cit. p. 10

30. ibid. P.6