

## Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Labyrinth of Dependency: Who Will Unravel the Threads?

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*Learned institutions ought to be favorite objects with every free people. They throw that light over the public mind which is the best security against crafty & dangerous encroachment on the public liberty.*

James Madison  
Letter to W. T. Barry  
August 4, 1822

### Abstract

*The past decade has witnessed a quantum leap in global innovative technological and economic development, a vault that owes a great deal to higher education-based research and training. Universities and other research institutions (especially those in more developed countries) continue to claim center stage in the knowledge-driven 21st century economy.*

*But the condition of sub-Saharan Africa higher education clearly indicates that it has been far from being an active partaker of this development pie; but has instead, during the past two decades, exhibited a worrisome trend of deterioration. Whereas, as some scholars have*

*maintained, the immediate cause of this state of affairs is financial—lack of educational resources to propel the institutions' teaching, research and service agenda, a critical analysis of the systems reveals an underlying intricacy of dependency, which has forestalled any ideas or attempts to develop a self-sustaining culture that has buttressed higher education advancement in other continents.*

*This paper addresses the historical, philosophical and structural dependency tangles prevalent in the sub-Saharan higher education systems, and offers suggestions for rectification.*

## **Introduction**

Beginning, especially, in the 1980s, sub-Saharan Africa's higher education has taken a precipitous downward turn, in many ways reaching crisis proportions, as resources have dwindled—and by extension, a declivity of its quality (Atteh, 1996; Giri, 1990). The immediate and most identifiable causes of this state of affairs has, for the most part, been identified as economic—budgetary shortfalls due to reduced government funding as a result of declining economies; cut backs on public funding, as a result of World Bank/IMF structural adjustment policies; and re-prioritization of basic education (citing higher rates of returns) as enshrined by the 1990 Jomtien conference on "Education For All," a stance that has cast higher education further into oblivion, running on very deficient resources. The results have been daunting—a paltry of educational resources, such as textbooks and other instructional and research materials; erosion of student and faculty morale; flight of professors in search of greener pastures elsewhere in the world (brain drain) due to meager salaries; incessant student protests and demonstrations due to removal of certain allowances; and inevitably, the flagging quality of education (Nkinyangi, 1991; Atteh, 1996; World Bank, 1997).

While the economic argument is undeniably legitimate—funding being a *sine qua non* for development and growth in all sectors of life, including education; underlying these economic and financial realities, is a web of dependency that has hamstrung the university since its inception, a web that needs to be addressed if the current efforts towards revitalization of African higher education systems are to reach fruition.

In this paper, I explore these dependencies, which include governance dependency, financial dependency, systems dependency, research and scholarship dependency, and cultural dependency. I shall in the end make suggestions for redress, highlighting also lessons to be learned from other higher education systems in the world, especially, those in the United States.

As to who will break these strings of dependency, I propose that it will necessarily be a concerted effort of all the stakeholders involved—national governments, universities themselves, the donor community, the business community; the global academic community; and indeed, civil society—via a conscious system-wide analysis and transformation, not just a palliative face lift (Wilms, 1996).

### **The Dependency Web**

Before I explore the aforementioned threads of dependency in sub-Sahara's higher education, I will first make note of this generalization—this paper addresses universities in sub-Saharan Africa in general; not unaware, however, of the fact that some systems, especially those in South Africa and other economically well-off countries have made a recognizable leap towards revitalization and independence. But because many of sub-Saharan African universities share the same colonial history (French, British and Belgian traditions), an analysis that approaches them *in toto*, may help identify general trends.

## Governance Dependency

University education in sub-Saharan Africa is of colonial origin and was established under the rubric of the colonial governments' systems of higher education. The front-line purpose was to establish institutions of higher learning within the colonies (especially, following the end of World War I) in order to develop a native labor force to support the development of the colonies. Prior to that, (since the 16<sup>th</sup> century) African students were granted scholarships to attend universities in Europe—one of the earliest beneficiaries being the son of the King of Congo who attained a university education in Portugal (BBC World Service website).

Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, established in 1867 by the Church Missionary Society and affiliated to Durham University in London, was the first to be established and the only University College until 1948. Its evangelical mission was not different from that of the original European and American colleges, which was aimed at educating clergymen for missionary work in the colonies. As well, it was argued that a college in Africa would address the danger of uprooting young people from their culture if they attended universities abroad; but its governance controls as well as its on-site administration would be European (Ajayi *et al.*, 1996).

Colonial government-supported colleges came into the limelight, especially, during the 1920s and were founded as public universities with little religious influence. The British-founded colleges—Ibadan (Nigeria), Legon (Ghana) Gordon (Sudan) and Makerere (Uganda)—were affiliated with London University in the 1940s; whereas likewise the French universities, such as Tunis (Tunisia), Dakar (Senegal), Tananarive—Abidjan (Ivory Coast), and Brazzaville (Congo), were assigned supervision by the different French universities (Paris, Bordeaux, D' Aix Marseilles). Similarly, the Belgian Louvanium college in the Congo (Kinshasa) was supervised by its parent university of Louvanium in

Belgium (Sangini, 1996). Evidently, these institutions were established with almost exclusive control by forces outside of the university, and were obviously heavily dependent upon the colonial governments as well as their European affiliating universities.

Aside from just a few universities (Khartoum, Makerere, Legon, Ibadan), most of the current universities in sub-Saharan Africa are post-independence institutions created by the new post-colonial governments as bastions of knowledge and powerful representations of independence and nationalism. These new institutions were no less dependent on their government: With a few exceptions, such as Universities of Lesotho and Asmara, which were founded by religious organizations, many of the post-independence universities were created by a statutory act of parliament—an indication that politicians would have a high stake, or even an upper hand, in their governance, since they held the key to the government's pulse. In the former British colonies, especially, the head of state (president) would be the university chancellor, with invested powers to appoint the vice-chancellor, who would in effect be the chief executive officer with, supposedly, autonomous administrative powers (Curry, *et al.* 1987). However, since the governments were the chief sponsors, they maintained control, affirming that because public institutions run on taxpayer's money, they must be "held accountable."

Eventually, some presidents infiltrated the universities with their political agendas—agendas that in some cases had a devastating impact on the process of education. One example is former Ugandan president Milton Obote's maneuver, in the 1960s, to establish the youth wing of his ruling party (Uganda People's Congress), whose acronym was NUSU (National Union of Students of Uganda) (Mudoola, 1993).

Former military presidents Bokassa of Central African Republic, Sani Abacha of Nigeria, and Idi Amin of Uganda are examples of African leaders who employed blatant military means to exert their influence on the

university. These strategies often resulted in clashes with students, faculty and administrators, and had debilitating consequences—frequent closure of institutions, expulsion of students, flight of professors, and regrettably, even loss of life. Many African governments, even today, continue to assume their “big daddy” role, since their public universities still have to bow to their waist, awaiting their quarterly funding appropriations from the treasury.

### Financial Dependency

Needless to mention, most universities in sub-Saharan Africa (both colonial and post-independence institutions) were created as institutions that would financially depend upon their governments. As the sample table below indicates, universities as well as the students and the community generated little contribution.

FIGURE 1

#### Financing of Universities (sources of income by percentage)

<i>University</i>	<i>Government Grant/ Subvention</i>	<i>Tuition and Fees</i>	<i>Other Grants (primarily sponsored posts)</i>	<i>University Services</i>
<i>Addis Ababa</i>	59.8	0.2	-	40.0
<i>Asmara</i>	88.2	11.7	0.1	-
<i>Botswana</i>	57.7	14.7	5.9	21.7
<i>Dar-es Salaam</i>	92.0	6.0	-	2.0
<i>Lesotho</i>	76.4	8.9	5.5	9.2
<i>Mauritius</i>	93.7	5.8	-	0.5
<i>Swaziland</i>	71.4	8.7	10.9	9.0
<i>Zambia</i>	78.6	16.0	-	5.4
<i>Zimbabwe</i>	90.0	-	10.0	-

Source: Curry, et al., (1987)

Students were provided with not only almost free education, but also with free room and board, transportation to and from the university as well as allowances for books and pocket money. Initially, government appropriations to the university were readily provided, as enrollment was relatively small, with a consistent inflow of funds from colonial governments.

After independence, the new governments pledged to continue the funding outflow as they heavily depended on the universities to train an African elite to take over the mantle of leadership from the departing expatriates. But as demand for higher education began to increase, especially, during the late 1970s due to expanded elementary and secondary systems; and as the economic earnings in several countries began to take a downward turn, governments quickly realized that the cost of education based on colonial standards was impossible to bear. For many countries the inevitable consequence was budget cuts, which resulted in removal of some subsidies and allowances as well as other educational resources, thus heavily affecting educational delivery processes and outcomes.

### **Systems Dependency**

One of the most enduring criticisms of Sub-Saharan African university systems is their "Ivory Tower" portrayal—a colonial elitist model of university systems that was transplanted from Europe. The criticism today is not so much about this transplanted matrix, for most African governments have been independent for well over 30 years now; it is rather about the fact that, in their effort to Africanize the university, as exhibited in the formation of the Association of African Universities established in 1967 and in the follow-up conferences, African universities are still far from achieving their goal of freeing themselves from the colonial stamp. Many scholars have observed that the African university

systems as upheld, are not only archaic, foreign, centralized, and dauntingly bureaucratized, but are also, in many ways, irrelevant to the conditions of contemporary Africa (Mazrui, 1993).

The colonial view of a university (in Africa) with comparable standards to universities in Europe, without enough resources to sustain them, and without a sound technology and research base for a self-propelling academic culture, has little resonance with the African condition today. For example, a colonial university student provided with free education, three-course meals, free textbooks and allowances, is a delusion of the mind, not only in Africa but also in Europe itself.

Furthermore, the vision that buttressed the creation of universities in the colonies set them on the road to dependency: to train a cadre of an educated elite who would serve as auxiliaries in administration and development of the colonies (a problem-solving utilitarian view) that has robbed universities of their innovative potential, a linchpin for academic growth (Sangini, 1996).

Students who were offered scholarships to study abroad (almost exclusively in Britain, France and Belgium), where they would be under strict surveillance, were encouraged to pursue careers in medicine, education, administration, and other vocational professions for the development of the colonies.

### **Scholarship and Research Dependency**

As Mazrui (1993) has lamented, even after many years of independence, African universities—their curricula and systems, and indeed, their character are excessively Eurocentric. The original idea of a university in the colonies was that of an institution that would be of comparable standards with their counterpart European universities, both in teaching and research, focusing on addressing the African condition. But the teaching strand of the trinity mission of higher education (teaching, research and service) was overemphasized to address the

critical demand for labor, a demand that persisted even after independence. Research was, therefore, cast into oblivion, and was further devitalized by the budgetary constraints that affected the university beginning in the late 1970s.

For the most part, therefore, universities have been consumers rather than producers of research. As a result, unlike in American and European systems, research has played an exiguous role in defining the sub-Saharan African academy. The little that has been done has been limited to basic research and some applied investigation, with a dearth of developmental research (Ngara, E., 1995).

It is not surprising, therefore, that Western scholars, have maintained a commanding presence—as compared to African ones—in the African research agenda, given their access to research funding, as exhibited by the majority of the publications on Africa.

Another area of research dependence, one that is often unidentified, is the fact that universities, as educational institutions have done little education-based research on themselves. Much of the research on higher education has been done by political scientists, management scholars, public policy analysts, sociologists, among others—research that has informed those disciplines more than it has informed higher education. One reason could be the absence of higher education research as a field of study in many African universities.

Little data-based longitudinal research has been done to analyze and assess the outcomes of college, such as student cognitive skills and intellectual growth, identity formation, moral and psychological development, psycho-social changes, career choice and development, economic benefits of college and quality of life after college, among other things. Such assessments would form a solid base for understanding the impact of college on students and society—and hence, the value of higher education (Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991).

## Cultural Dependency

Scholars have consistently decried the current identity crisis in the Sub-Saharan African academy—its lack of an African character (Sangini 1996; Mazrui, 1993; Giri, J, 1990). One obvious reason is its European origin, a shade that has remained prominent. Pre-existing educational values which could have formed a backdrop for understanding the African people and their educational needs, were rendered primitive and effectively debunked (Ajayi, et al, 1996; Fafunwa, 1982; Tiberondwa, 1978).

All the planning and implementation was done the European way, without any local input. Western values were considered preeminent and a necessary condition for civilization and development. As a result, African universities have found themselves culturally encapsulated, a condition that has persisted despite the post-independence move to Africanize the university, as accentuated in the numerous conferences: Addis Ababa 1961, Tananarive 1962, Nairobi 1968, Kinshasa 1969, the Lagos Plan of Action 1985, Harare 1987, and many subsequent ones—not withstanding, of course, the formation of the Association of African Universities in 1967 (Sangini, 1996; Ngara, 1995). Scholars have argued that little has been achieved in this direction because the curriculum, and indeed the whole scholarship spectrum, is still predominantly Eurocentric, saluting the western ways of thinking and world making, and thus eclipsing African thought and culture (Mazrui, 1993).

Now, with the current wave of globalization, whereby the powerful governments, multilateral and bilateral agencies, and corporations are setting the agenda, the African mind is left overwhelmed—if not mesmerized—by the explosion of the knowledge-based economy, as the computer is still foreign to well over 90% of the population. The cultural theories debated at the universities, the ideological frameworks that buttress university operations, the curricula required books, and

the background training of the majority of the professors, are all indicators that an African university may be a figment of the mind, at least in the near future. As Rwekaza Mukandala, the head of the political science department at the University of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania (as cited by Useem, A., 1997) has maintained, "now we are run by the Washington consensus, politically, and economically;" and I would add, educationally and culturally—an identity crisis, indeed.

### **Who Will Break the Strings?**

The above assessment was intended to highlight the tapestry of constraining forces of dependency in the Sub-Saharan African university, forces that are for the most part beyond the universities' control, rendering them powerless and, therefore, limiting their ability to make a recognizable impact on national development. As earlier observed, some of those forces are, obviously, economic due to acute shortage of funding; others are historical, given that the systems were created as dependent in the first place; some are political, since many African government are yet to loosen their tenacious grip on public institutions; and still others are university-based, accruing from the often observed poor management as well as resistance to change.

As for the question of who will break the strings of dependency, this paper argues that it will be a result of stakeholders' concerted effort: national governments, universities, donor organizations, the business community, the academic family (global), and indeed, civil society.

### **National Governments**

That governments should demand accountability from public institutions is unquestionable; but governments need as well, to refrain from subjecting the university to political manipulation and unnecessary bureaucratic

controls—controls that have crippled the university's ability to create its vision as an independent academic institution.

Some countries have taken considerable steps toward securing university autonomy—a recipe for transformation: Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique has succeeded in pressuring the government to adopt legislation that has granted increased autonomy, while its neighbor, University of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania is still lobbying Parliament to that effect (Bollag, 2000)

The Ugandan parliament has recently passed the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions bill, which in effect would transfer the position of chancellor from the president to an academic who would be based at the university. If the bill comes to force, the head of state will assume the title of "Visitor," thus granting the two government-funded universities (Makerere University and Mbarara University of Science and Technology) more governance leeway.

Governments will also need to review their stance on higher education, whose attention has been flagging, following the current crusade for basic education. Universities are viewed as expensive institutions with low rates of return, and serving just a small percentage of the population. But the role of universities in national development cannot be underestimated. As repositories of knowledge, universities have the potential for innovative development, the engine for the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

In the United States, for example, there exists an inseparable partnership-in-development between the university and the development of the Union, which can be traced as far back as the Civil War with the inaction of the first Morrill Act in 1862, giving rise to the Land Grant colleges, and opening up avenues for higher education's involvement in extended areas of national development (Cohen, 1998).

The Morrill Act granted about 17.5 million acres of land to States for building universities, with the proviso for emphasis on science and research—giving rise to major research universities, such as, University of Illinois (1867), University of California (1868), and colleges across the country (Cohen, 1998). The Act specified that the Morrill program endow “at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as related to agriculture and the mechanic art” (Hofstadter & Smith, 1961, p. 568 – as cited by Cohen, 1998).

University-based research was to play a pivotal role in the post-World War industrial era and the Cold War military innovation to check the Soviet military might, as reflected in the passing of the 1958 National Defense Education Act, giving higher education great impetus in the education of future scientists and engineers, a stimulation that would return the United States to the position of world supremacy in defense as well as technological development.

In the contemporary economy, such critical areas as computer design, finding the cure for AIDS, and designing new technologies, among other issues, are some of the many indicators that the university continues to be at the helm of national and global development.

In a similar manner, instead of playing the role of master and provider, African governments will need to play the role of partner-in-development. For example, the current crucial national development programs in Africa, such as economic recovery, poverty eradication, disease (especially AIDS) control and prevention, food production, universal primary education as well as the daunting issue of conflict and peace in Africa, could more fully employ the university's expert knowledge in research, assessment and implementation—a partnership that would not only be a source of income for the university, but would also further illuminate its indispensable presence.

## Universities

Universities will inevitably play a big role in reshaping their vitality as creators and conveyors of knowledge as well as taking center stage in national development. A common criticism of African universities is that they have failed to follow through on their espoused post-independence mission of being the engine for shaping the development of the new independent nations; that they have only succeeded in the training of human resources for civil service (Shabani, 1998), which has in recent years reached excess proportions—hence the current massive educated, unemployed population.

In order to rise from the current crisis, universities will need to concentrate more energy in the area of self-reliance via research and other means of service to the public in order to curtail over-dependence on the government, whose pulse is not only shrinking but is also overwhelmed by competing demands such as basic education, rural development, and health. In this age of knowledge-based economies, universities stand at a great advantage, since they are the citadels of knowledge.

The 1990s have seen some transformation on university campuses to address the shrinking government financial support. For example, in 1993, Makerere University in Uganda (which has won high World Bank appraisal) initiated a program of private sponsorship, whereby students who qualify for admission but fail to make the touchstone for government sponsorship,<sup>1</sup> would be admitted on condition that they pay their way as self-sponsored students. This program has since expanded to include returning students who attend evening classes.

In its five-year strategic plan, the university projects to increase the student population from the current 22,000 to 35,000 by the year 2005 (Maseruka, 2000). The new program has not only expanded access opportunities, but has also become a considerable source of income. As a result, the university has been able to provide some of the needed resources as well as increases

in faculty and staff salaries, among other things.

While the program has attracted criticism—the most prominent being that the drive to raise money might compromise the kernel academic value of quality of education, given the evident overpopulation as well as claims for preferential treatment in favor of the money-generating private students (Kilinaki, 2000)—it attempts to address the critical issues of access and funding, a considerable impact, indeed.

The University of Zimbabwe has privatized some of its entities, while the University of Dar es Salaam has launched a system-wide study in view of the inevitable transformation—all to address the issue of reduced government funding and the ever increasing demand for access.

In recent years universities in South Africa, in particular, have taken the lead in recognizing and initiating higher education research as a field of study to assess its delivery as well as its outcomes, similar to higher education research in the United States. The creation of the Center for Higher Education Development at the University of Cape Town is one such current development in higher education research. Makerere University too has created a small higher education division within the school of education, which focuses on the study of higher education management and policy.

In the same vein, the Association of African Universities has renewed its call for a coordinated effort among member universities to implement higher education studies and research—its delivery processes (teaching research and institutional management) as well as its outcomes, especially in terms of student career development by, “developing tracer studies aimed at monitoring life after graduation, with particular reference to employment patterns of young graduates” (Association of African Universities, 2002, p.2). The association further underscores its commitment to the implementation of its human resource development in science and technology—a critical base for university revitalization and

development.

Although the above initiatives as embraced by some universities as well as the Association of African Universities and donor support agencies are great indicators for change toward self-reliance, they are still very limited and palliative, in part due to financial constraints, government controls as well as overbureaucratized university policies that in many ways obviate or slacken change processes. Other change constraining forces include university-based apprehension towards reform—the need to maintain the status quo, the academic tradition, coupled with deficient expertise in policy formation and management.

### **Donor Agencies**

Donor agencies have been, and continue to be, major players in the life of universities in sub-Saharan Africa. The Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the World Bank, USAID, UNESCO, the Agence Univeritaire de la Francophonie, the Swedish Agency for Research Co-operation with Developing Countries (SIDA/SAREC) and several other governmental and non-governmental agencies have exhibited commitment to the advancement of education on the continent.

For example, in the year 2000 four American foundations (the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation) announced a \$100 million five-year program targeted for the support of higher education in Africa. Their main strategy is to support selected institutions, especially in quality improvement and promotion of their relevance to their countries' social and economic needs (Bollag, 2000).

Through its Regional Bureau for Education in Africa, UNESCO has strategized different forms of university capacity building: enhancing research capabilities; strengthening the science and technological potential; setting up regional linkages among universities

for shared resources; developing post-graduate programs on a sub-regional basis; and establishing staff development programs, among other initiatives (Chitoran, D., 1990).

The World Bank has recently reviewed its stance on higher education, a stance that was largely associated with the 1990 Jomtien Conference's basic education-driven declaration of "Education for All," which has resulted in scant support for higher education. The Bank now believes that "urgent action to expand the quantity and improve the quality of higher education in developing countries should be a top development priority" (World Bank Task Force, 2000, p. 10). The Task Force further points out that given the on-going 21st century knowledge revolution, "higher education institutions, as the prime creators and conveyors of knowledge, must be at the forefront of the effort to narrow the development gap between industrial and developing countries" (p. 33).

Like UNESCO and other donor agencies, the Bank's strategy is university capacity-building via management training, provision of educational resources, curricula reform, and organizational transformation—a shift from the traditional strategy of providing scholarships for students to attend universities abroad.

Through its Johannesburg office established in 1993, the Ford Foundation has made major progress in the higher education revitalization process, especially in Southern Africa. The Foundation has provided grants to support the following programs: Center for Higher Education Transformation (CHED) to co-ordinate research funding as well as facilitating regional co-ordination; Joint Education Trust to enhance higher education service partnership with the public and private sectors; UNITECH, a technology development professional liaison between universities and the work force; the Council on Higher Education aimed at enhancing the quality of higher education systems; and the South African Vice Chancellors' Association (The Ford Foundation, 2002). The Foundation has, in addition,

provided funding in support of University of Namibia and Eduardo Mondlane University's change and development efforts.

Whereas the above consensus is, obviously, a viable approach on the way to addressing the current crisis in higher education, and may in the long run enable universities to be self-sustaining, universities should take the leading role in setting the transformation agenda, in order to avoid the current backlash on the 1980s Structural Adjustment policies designed and imposed on developing countries by the World Bank and IMF, as admitted by the IMF Managing Director, Horst Koehler and World Bank President, James D. Wolfensohn, on their recent trip to Africa (Los Angeles Times, February 25, 2001).

### **The Business Community (University-Industry Cooperation)**

The university, being a knowledge powerhouse that pulls together professionals from different traditions and disciplines, is a great opportunity for business and development. The government as well as the private sector will need to utilize more of this pool of knowledge and skills.

In this age of competitive business and a globalized economy that is in constant flux as consumer demands increase and change frequently, the university's expertise in research, assessment, quality improvement, and projection analysis, will be an indispensable force. As the World Bank Task Force has pointed out, the university and industry will together play a crucial role of development through research, technology, development and adaptation, as well as production and marketing (Task Force, 2000).

Taking a similar stance, the February 9<sup>th</sup> 2001 Nairobi AAU 10<sup>th</sup> General Conference issued the "Declaration on the African University in the Third Millennium" accentuating its proposition to reinvent the

university and its role in African development, by investing in research, information and communication technology as well as leadership, management and policy formation training (Association of African Universities, 2002).

Armed with such expertise, universities will then need to take the initiative in beefing up research and consulting programmatic contacts with corporate establishments and other commercial markets as well as non-governmental and governmental organizations—all of which are heavily involved in the current African development agenda, an agenda that constantly seeks new knowledge and professional skills.

Just as universities in the United States have and continue to play a major research role in national defense, agriculture, health, business management and other technological advances, African universities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century have a great potential of engineering national and continental development.

For example, the recent American congressional initiative of opening its market for African business (African Growth and Opportunity Act) is an opportune avenue that will, obviously, require increased technological expertise in production, experimentation and analysis as well as constant quality improvement, thus presenting a great moment for universities, whose skills and knowledge capacity will be critical.

As noted earlier, the pool of funds drawn from these research and training engagements would lend great support to the process of education, especially in providing research and teaching materials as well as faculty and staff remuneration, among other things. In addition, evidence exists elsewhere in the world that university-industry engagement and friendship remains a formidable fund-raising base as the business community continues to exhibit renewed interest in its support of education and development.

## The Academic Family

The global academic family will also play a big role in reinventing the African university by, for instance, sharing resources, establishing scholarship and research partnership with African academics, as well as opening avenues for African scholarly publications and conference participation.

To this end, the current efforts toward developing a culture of university networking and co-operation on continental and regional levels evident on the African continent is noteworthy, and stands as a potential formidable springboard. The Association of African Universities, the Association of Francophone Universities and Francophone University networks (AUPELF-UREF); the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES); regional inter-university councils across the continent as well as networks of student associations are showing renewed signs of closer collaboration. The purpose is to boost their development by sharing resources, standardizing their academic programs, establishing joint research and technology ventures to address the critical issues in Africa, among other initiatives.

In addition, African universities continue to maintain or seek international higher education linkages, especially, via the following connective threads: membership in the International Association of Universities (IAU); active participation in the UNESCO efforts to encourage and develop higher education international co-operation as highlighted in the 1998 world conference on "Education in 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Vision and Action" held in Paris; and involvement in the Commonwealth education support initiatives, such as the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CUSAC), the Commonwealth University Study Abroad Consortium, the distance education-driven Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the Commonwealth Higher Education Support Scheme (CHESS), the

Commonwealth Higher Education Management Scheme (CHEMS) and the organization's effort to develop twinning relationships (UNITWIN) between universities in the developed nations and those in developing countries (Chitorani, 1990; Mve-Ondo, 1998; Wright, 1998; Ouiminga, 1998; Egron-Polak, 1998).

Although the above effort are signs of hope and renewed optimism toward revitalization and development of sub-Saharan Africa higher education systems, many of these initiatives still need pragmatic commitment in terms of presence, policy and resources to bolster the existing good will.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, in this paper I have attempted to uncover the dependency maze that has characterized the Sub-Saharan African university since its inception, a condition that has contributed to its state of deterioration. The identified dependency strands, which include governance dependency, financial dependency, systems dependency, scholarship and research dependency, and cultural dependency, have denied the universities their autonomy and self-determination—a component that has enabled universities elsewhere in the world, especially in the United States, to not only become self-developing but also to be the defining character in national development.

Currently, there are signs of renewed effort to revitalize Sub-Saharan African universities as exhibited by the commitment of some African governments, the Association of African Universities, individual universities, the World Bank, UNESCO, the Rockefeller and Ford foundations, several European governmental and non-governmental agencies, and various other organizations. But for these efforts to materialize, the dependency strings need to be addressed, which will necessarily be a result of a conscious and collaborative effort of the different players in the Sub-Saharan African higher education agenda: national governments,

universities, the donor agencies, the business community, universities around the world, and civil society—towards university self-sustenance, and vitality.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Currently the government sponsors only the top 2,000 students. The rest are admitted on a self-sponsorship basis. For example, for the 2000-2001 academic year, 16,740 students were eligible for admission. The government sponsored 2,000 (12%), and the remaining 1,4740 (88%) would be admitted only if they could afford to pay the tuition.

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