



**THE ROLE OF THE
UNIVERSITY AND ITS
FUTURE IN ZIMBABWE**

**INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE
PAPERS**



THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY
AND ITS FUTURE
IN
ZIMBABWE



International Conference Papers

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FOREWORD

by

Professor W.J. Kamba
Principal and Vice-Chancellor
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This book is a record of the papers which were read at the Conference on the Role of the University and its Future in Zimbabwe, held on this campus in September 1981.

It was perhaps the most important Conference in the history of this University. It was attended by an impressive group of scholars from Africa and abroad, and Government leaders. The papers were highly scholarly and the debate which followed each presentation was very stimulating and thought-provoking.

This collection of essays constitutes a book of readings for students interested in problems of university development in Zimbabwe in particular, and in Africa in general, and those interested in university reform and the politics of higher education.

I must, on behalf of the University, express my gratitude to the Carnegie Corporation of New York for making it possible for us to hold the Conference, and subsequently for enabling us to publish these papers. To the participants who contributed immensely to the Conference; and to the Organising Committee for a job well done, I, also, express my profound gratitude.

CHAPTER 7

THE UNIVERSITY IN THE THIRD WORLD: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Professor Philip G. Altbach

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to point out some of the insights from comparative higher education that are relevant for universities in the Third World.¹ This discussion is predicated on the idea that it is possible to learn from the experiences of other countries but seldom possible to successfully copy directly from overseas models. Thus, it is intended to raise consciousness concerning problems and possibilities rather than to point to overseas models that may be immediately applicable in a Third World context.

One cannot escape several basic realities concerning higher education in the Third World that produce problems and inequality in the international system.² Universities are part of an international system and cannot escape this reality. And this system is largely controlled by the industrialized nations.³ Further, Third World universities are linked to metropolitan institutions by historical tradition and organizational models. There is today no viable indigenous Third World institution of higher learning that functions in the modern sphere. Those few indigenous examples, such as the Al-Azhar in Cairo, are linked to the preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge, in this case Islamic studies. Despite efforts in China, Tanzania and other countries to create "indigenous" academic models, institutional patterns, pedagogical techniques and, perhaps most important, the basic structure of knowledge, is Western in origin.⁴ Thus, one of the main themes of this paper is the international historical and contemporary relationship between universities. Third World universities also face a number of problems which, while evident in industrialized nations as well, are particularly difficult in the context of social and economic development. Questions such as the appropriate relationship between the university and the state and the related issues of accountability and autonomy, the issue of expansion and how to deal with it, the adaptation of curricula and pedagogical elements to meet local needs, and especially the establishment of academic norms and traditions appropriate to a Third World society.⁵ Third World universities also face serious problems in obtaining needed resources. The competition for scarce financial resources is very sharp, and the needs of other segments of the education system must also be met in a period when higher education has been criticized for its elitism and questioned as to its direct contribution to economic growth.⁶ Building up the necessary academic infrastructures is also difficult — and increasingly expensive. Laboratories, generally requiring expensive imported equipment have become more complex in order to keep up with scientific advances. Books for libraries, again largely purchased overseas, are an increasing financial burden. And perhaps most important, obtaining adequately trained academic staff often requires hiring expatriates, whose influence on academic institutions is important and largely unexplored.⁷ This paper will explore how some of these crucial issues have been dealt with in other Third World nations as well as in industrialized nations.

HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS

As Eric Ashby has documented, universities in the Third World, almost without exception, stem from Western models and reflect a complex historical development which has been primarily influenced by these non-indigenous traditions.⁸ With the exception of a few countries such as Thailand and Japan, the historical roots of universities are colonial, and

a complex nexus of relationships between indigenous demands for higher education and the policies and orientations of the colonial context.⁹ Reality is much more complex than the colonial power simply dictating the nature of higher education in the colony. Conflicts within the colonial administration and changes in policy influenced the development of higher education, as did the demands of indigenous groups.¹⁰ As Ashby points out, the British altered policy concerning the expansion of higher education after the Indian Mutiny of 1858 and this had implications for Africa. As a practical result of this change, higher education in British African colonies expanded much more slowly than it did in India. It is, of course, true that the basic higher education model was that of the colonial power, although with significant variations.¹¹ In general, the colonial power did not export its best institutional models. Most colonial powers limited the expansion and scope of higher education in their colonies and as a result when independence came, post-secondary education was very limited. The curriculum was biased toward the arts and little scientific or technological training was available. Institutions were generally quite small. A considerable percentage of those in the colonies obtaining higher education did so in the metropole. The French were even less interested in the expansion of higher education in the colonies than were the British, and the Belgians virtually forbade post-secondary education in the Congo.

Zimbabwe's higher education development does not significantly differ from this general model. Institutions were kept quite small (and in Zimbabwe, Africans had little access to existing institutions in any case), the curriculum was limited, and the academic models followed were strictly British. Even after the end of formal colonial status, the British influence on higher education remained dominant.¹²

The historical models chosen by non-colonized non-Western nations show some interesting variations. The Japanese, as the major nation that has independently attained the status of a major industrial power, based this development in part on education. They carefully examined alternative educational models, and finally chose to adopt the German model in the late 19th century. The Japanese chose wisely, since the Germans were then building up their own industrial base in part stimulated by the applied research done by the universities.

The major German innovation was emphasis on research combined with the growth of the doctorate as a research degree. Other nations also followed the German pattern, including the United States, which was at the time also building up its industrial and technological base. The fact that the Japanese, and the Americans, were free to choose their own academic models was quite helpful in ensuring that their emerging academic systems met their needs as effectively as possible.¹³ It is also significant that both the Americans and the Japanese used models which had been basically pioneered elsewhere and did not attempt to build an entirely new academic model — although the American "land grant" concepts was a significant innovation in defining the role of the university in broad societal terms and in stressing the importance of applied research and practical assistance to industry and agriculture.¹⁴

The relevance of this historical excursion is clear: the colonial experience had a great deal to do with the kind of university which was built in the colonies and it is clear that while there was an interplay between colonial demands and official policy, the basic orientation of the emerging higher education system reflected the needs and biases of the colonial power. Further, in no case has a newly independent formerly colonized nation dramatically rejected the academic system it inherited. While some countries, like India and Nigeria have expanded their higher education systems and in some have built new institutions which have different models, their basic academic systems remain virtually unaltered. Even the more radical nations do not seem to have made essential structural alterations in academic institutions. While technical and scientific education, and in a few countries, research has been stressed, there probably remains an over-reliance on the liberal arts in most Third World nations. Thus, the legacy of the colonial past remains strong in such important spheres on the basic models of university organization, the curriculum, textbooks, and orientations toward academic life.

THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK: ANATOMY OF INEQUALITY

Just as Third World universities are deeply affected by their colonial roots, they are also part of an international academic community which, at base, places Third World institutions at a distinct disadvantage. The international academic prestige structure stresses the roles of the major knowledge producing research universities in the

industrialized nations, and particularly in the United States, Britain and France. All other institutions look up to Oxford and Cambridge, Harvard and Chicago, and Paris. These institutions establish the norms of academic life. They produce top scholars who then reflect institutional values when they attain positions of power elsewhere. The prestigious institutions are able to obtain research funds and thus are the producers of new knowledge. Their definitions of what is appropriate knowledge and research tend to set the standard.

There is also an international knowledge system which works to the disadvantage of Third World nations. Not only is the bulk of the world's research produced in a small number of metropolitan institutions, but the major means of dissemination are controlled by the metropolis as well. Without question, the predominance of English, and to an extent French, as the international media of communications give an advantage to the major English-speaking nations. The editors of the most prestigious scholarly journals are located at the major universities in the industrialized nations. The major publishing houses are generally located in New York, London and Paris.¹⁵ Most knowledge producers are located in the major Western universities and all but a tiny part of worldwide research expenditures are spent in these institutions. Further, the academic systems of the industrialized nations are large and relatively affluent. Thus, they constitute the major market for scholarly material and the producers naturally orient their products, be it a research project or a scholarly book, toward the major academic market.

The concentration of "intellectual power" is, in many ways, awesome. The major metropolitan institutions attract the best students and faculty, including many from the Third World who may, temporarily or permanently, become part of the "brain drain." They receive the bulk of the research funds. This concentration of intellectual and financial power permits these institutions to establish the basic norms and values of the research enterprise. These institutions tend to dominate the network of scholarly communications as well, either through journal editorships or through the fact that a large proportion of published scientific materials originate from these institutions. They constitute a "center" of international academic life and much of the rest of the world, including such wealthy industrial nations as Holland and Belgium, are clearly at the periphery. In a sense, this center-periphery relationship is an inevitable by-product of the inequalities in knowledge production and distribution which have been cited here.

Industrialized nations have many motivations for their foreign involvements in the field of education. But as an American educator and former Under Secretary of State has pointed out, education and culture are a "fourth dimension" of foreign policy. Most industrialized nations have sought, through their assistance programs, to maintain or enhance their influence in the Third World.¹⁶ The French have concentrated on maintaining the international role of the French language, the Americans on exporting their own model of higher education, and the British on maintaining links to the Commonwealth. While much foreign educational assistance may have a strong element of altruism and in general academic institutions and individual professors who work overseas are largely devoted to the betterment of the Third World, basic foreign policy interests lie behind a significant part of academic assistance programs.¹⁷

Third World nations must understand the implications of foreign assistance programs, and for that matter of the conscious borrowing of academic models and programs that takes place on a large scale. Most developing institutions and academic systems cannot do without external assistance of some kinds, and given the nature of the international knowledge network, relationships between the industrialized and developing nations will continue on an unequal basis. But there must be an awareness of the basic nature of the relationships as well as the implications of particular assistance projects.

The role of the expatriate teacher and administrator in the Third World is one that has received little analytic attention but is of considerable importance. Without question, expatriate teachers, advisors and sometimes administrators are necessary to provide needed skills and knowledge. But expatriates bring more than specific skills. They also reflect their own academic values and orientations. Their commitment is not completely to the country and institution in which they are working. The nature of the expatriate academic population also deserves some attention. Policies toward expatriates differ in the Third World. In most countries, permanent appointments are not available, although an individual instructor may remain as long as a decade at a single Third World institution. In some countries, such as Singapore, expatriates are watched very closely. In others, notably in the Middle East, expatriates tend to come from other Third World nations (such as Egypt and Pakistan). In some nations, expatriates are offered permanent appointments

on a basis similar to indigenous staff. In most instances, expatriates are paid at levels substantially higher than local staff, and this cannot but cause some tension. Without question, expatriate teachers are part of the complex relationship between the industrialized and Third World nations. They are the individual transmitters of both knowledge and also of the values and norms of the Western institutions.

It is clear from this discussion that the relationship between the industrialized nations and the Third World are essentially unequal and that it is important to fully understand the complexities of this relationship and for Third World nations to maintain as much control over their dealings with external academic institutions and governments as possible.

AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY: GOVERNMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE THIRD WORLD

One of the most perplexing problems for universities everywhere is the appropriate relationship between higher education and the state. Even in the industrialized nations, there is a sharp debate concerning this topic and there is considerable disagreement. But there is a basic acceptance of the basic governance structures of the university and, with some exceptions, respect for the concept of academic freedom in its traditional sense. That is, there is widespread agreement that the professor has the right to speak his or her mind in the classroom and, in general to write on public issues and to hold unorthodox political or social views. There is also general agreement that internal academic governance should remain in the hands of the academic community and that decisions concerning such matters as curricular change should be left to the academics.

But there has been considerably more controversy in the West about other key academic questions. In several countries, notably West Germany, France and the Netherlands, major reforms were imposed on reluctant universities by government authorities as a result of the turmoil of the 1960s.¹⁸ In Britain, fiscal crisis has substantially threatened the autonomy of individual universities and of the venerable University Grants Committee and has inserted government directly into academic decision making. In the United States, the public universities have been subjected to increasing scrutiny from the state governments in financial terms which have, in some instances, spilled over into the academic sphere. Governmental regulations concerning such matters as racial desegregation in higher education, facilities for handicapped students and affirmative action hiring programs for women and minorities have all intruded in some respects on the traditional autonomy of academic institutions.

In addition, there has been an increasingly strident demand for "accountability" in higher education — for governmental authorities, as the main agencies funding higher education, to measure and monitor the expenditure of funds.¹⁹ Many academics have argued that there is a very thin line between accountability and direct interference in academic decisions and processes. In general, government has won the battle although efforts to reach a solution that will provide a reasonable level of accountability and at the same time maintain academic autonomy continue. As financial problems become more serious, it is natural to expect that conflict between academic institutions and external funding authorities will grow more serious.

However threatened in the West, academic autonomy is in a more precarious position in the Third World. In many Third World nations, there is no pretense at viable autonomy for academic institutions. In Singapore, for example, the university is considered to be an arm of the government and is expected to follow governmental policies without question.²⁰ While there are also some fetters on the individual academic freedom of the professor, there remains considerable freedom in this area. In many Third World nations, political loyalty is expected from the academic community, and those who violate accepted standards of political discourse are often dealt with harshly. Hard pressed governments, fearing political unrest on the one hand and under pressure to achieve quick economic and social progress on the other, often look to universities as both a threat to stability and as a potential contributor to development. Thus, universities are often given little autonomy to make their own decisions and set their own goals.

While one might defend the traditional concept of institutional autonomy and argue that the best universities are those that are permitted to set their own goals, it is clear that academic institutions can function without basic autonomy. Universities in the Soviet Union have long functioned with reasonable effectiveness despite very limited autonomy and little academic freedom. Yet, it is the case that the most distinguished universities in the world are institutions which have basic institutional autonomy and in which the

academic community — notably the faculty — maintains basic procedural and substantive control. They are also institutions which are relatively free of political fetters and controls. One of the key problems in the Third World is the lack of a clear agreement on the role of the university and on the basic structure of governance. Because institutions of higher education are relatively new, because they are not indigenous, and because they were established in many instances by external groups whose concerns were not necessarily those of the indigenous population, universities remain fragile institutions. And it is the case that it is relatively easy to destroy an academic institution although it is quite difficult to build an institution of quality. Thus, it is necessary for Third World societies to agree on a basic "academic constitution" that can provide stability for the institution as well as guidelines for acceptable norms of behaviour for those within the university as well as for government. The academic community, both teachers and students, must recognize that the state in many Third World nations, is fairly fragile and political activism must be tempered by this realization. Governments, for their part, must recognize that a university is not just another government bureau, that the intellectual needs of an institution of higher learning are special and that such institutions are often hard to control. There must be sufficient autonomy permitted so that universities can govern themselves in a basic internal sense. Both government and university must recognize that Third World institutions have special responsibilities for nation-building and for economic development.

It is easy to articulate a need but difficult to provide specific guidelines concerning how to develop a working relationship between governments anxious for stability and development and universities, which by their nature are often unruly and difficult to govern. A useful first step is mutual understanding of the needs and constraints on both sides of the equation. Governmental authorities must understand that universities are fragile institutions which have some rather special traditions and needs. Academic institutions, for their part, must be aware that they are part of a polity and that they can and should play an active role in the process of development.

UNIVERSITY REFORM

Academic institutions everywhere are criticized from many quarters for their unwillingness or inability to change to meet the changing needs of society. Students pressured universities to become more "relevant" during the turbulent 1960s and governments repeatedly pressed universities to permit greater fiscal accountability, revamp the curriculum so as to meet immediate needs, admit more students and in general help to contribute to immediate national needs. Academic institutions have been quite slow to change and, more often than not, have resisted reform pressures from wherever they have come.²¹

There is general agreement that universities are among the most conservative of institutions, even when a significant portion of the academic staff may be radical in their social or ideological views. This conservatism stems from a number of sources. Senior academic staff wish to preserve their often quite considerable power and see, with considerable justification, that many of the reform proposals of recent decades would limit this power.²² The faculty also is the direct heir to the basic tradition of the university, and as such it is often reluctant to favor radical change. Traditional academic values — such as freedom of inquiry, a commitment to quality teaching and the preservation of a widely accepted and carefully developed curricular structure — are often seen as detrimental to rapid institutional change. This is probably true — but at the same time there is much to be said in defense of these values. The academic profession also suffers from considerable inertia. Traditional patterns of academic governance do not lend themselves to rapid change.

It is possible to design and implement change in universities from outside, and in fact, this is how many of the reforms which were promulgated in Europe in the 1960s were implemented. But it is also possible for the academic community to sabotage these reforms, particularly when they are designed without a detailed understanding of the way in which academic institutions function. Indeed, many of the European reforms have not been successful, in considerable part because they ignored the nature of the university and its historical traditions.

As noted earlier, Third World universities inherited a foreign academic tradition. In this sense, it is easier to make changes since the traditions are not deeply entrenched, but there is a danger of destroying a fragile institution at the same time. The challenge is to

permit the growth of academic traditions while at the same time ensuring that important national needs are met. It should be kept in mind that universities cannot do everything and that their direct role in national social and economic development may be fairly limited. Higher education has often expanded very rapidly in Third World nations, and this has resulted in almost every case in a lowering of standards. Further, expansion has not generally been in the fields in which it is most needed, such as in science and technology. Rather, the growth has been in the liberal arts subjects and in such professional fields as law. Academic staff have been stretched by expansion, facilities and resources overused, and problems of unemployment for university graduates have occurred. Thus, expansion should be carefully planned — often a difficult task in nations where newly enfranchised and articulate urban groups create powerful pressures for expansion.

Generally speaking, Third World universities have expanded rapidly but have not basically reformed either their structures or curriculum. In many countries, old colonial academic traditions have been exchanged for newer, perhaps more useful, American or in some cases Soviet academic models.²³ New institutions devoted to management, technology and the like have been established alongside the traditional universities. All of this has been at great cost and it has engendered considerable confusion in a bifurcated academic system. Even in the most energetic and reformist — or revolutionary — Third World countries the academic system has changed, in its basic structure of governance, relatively little. The Chinese, for example, have followed several different paths to modernization, and in each case has included higher education in the equation of development. In each case, there were major problems, and the Chinese are now trying yet another path to academic progress, and it remains to be seen how this new approach will work.²⁴ India, which has the world's third largest higher education system (after the United States and the Soviet Union) has not basically altered its colonially-inherited university system although it has added on a variety of separate institutions, from agricultural universities on the American model to high-quality technological institutes patterned after institutions in West Germany, Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union. While these new institutions have, in general, been successful, the large majority of Indian students study in outmoded institutions which have declined in quality as a result of rapid expansion in the post-Independence period.²⁵

There is no generally successful Third World university reform. Even countries with centrally-planned economies, such as Cuba and China, have not claimed much success in developing institutions of higher education that have been successfully harnessed to the goals of social and economic development. Countries like India, Nigeria and the Philippines have rapidly expanded their higher education systems, but most agree that the results have been mixed. Unanticipated consequences such as shortages of qualified staff, limited funds so that quality could not be protected, and un- or under-employment of graduates have resulted from this expansion.

The challenge of reform remains. It is clear that Third World nations do have special needs which universities can help meet. The training of skilled manpower, scientific research that is geared to development needs, the fostering of a curriculum and publications that contribute to national awareness and other programs can be part of a university. Yet, a means of funding new programs and a way of convincing the academic community that these new programs are in their own interests as well as of national importance must be developed. There is as yet no blueprint, unfortunately, and each institution will have to think creatively about solutions. Negative examples from the annals of comparative higher education abound, but constructive alternatives are few.

POLITICS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Questions such as autonomy and accountability, university reform and others are inevitably linked to politics. In the Third World especially, academic decisions are almost necessarily political decisions because of the closeness of the university to the government, and the necessary expense of most academic developments. Further, universities are key political institutions, particularly in societies in which other political infrastructures are not well developed. Segments of the academic community, most dramatically the students but also academic staff from time to time, are directly involved in societal politics, often from an oppositional viewpoint. The university community, because it is a center of intellectual ferment, publication and debate is indirectly involved with politics.

The challenge, of course, is to somehow recognize the necessary political involvement of the academic community, attempt to insulate the university as an institution from direct political strife, and convince all of the participants in the academic community to keep political activism within appropriate boundaries.²⁶ The most dramatic — and sometimes violent — manifestation of academic political participation is student activism.

Students in the Third World have overthrown governments, and have very often constituted a key segment of the political opposition. They have, for a variety of reasons, been less effective in direct political activism in Africa than in such countries as South Korea, Turkey and Thailand, where they have been instrumental in toppling governments. Yet, African students have also been active and are key political actors in such countries as Zambia, Nigeria and elsewhere.²⁷ The reasons for the effectiveness of student political activism in the Third World are not difficult to understand. Students often act as a conscience and articulator of the urban segment of the population. Students are easy to mobilize, and they are exposed to varied ideologies and political views. Further, students in the Third World often expect to take part in societal politics as a prelude to their direct participation as adults. Students in many Third World nations, particularly in those countries which had an active national liberation struggle in which students participated, give student politics a certain legitimacy (as opposed to the industrialized countries, where students are not expected to participate in politics).

The lessons from a comparative study of student political activism and the governmental and university responses to it do not yield many directly relevant guidelines. In a sense, political activism is a normal part of academic life in the Third World and must therefore be taken seriously by academic authorities as well as public officials. All too often, the specific demands of students are not seriously considered. It is important to pay attention to the ideological perspectives and programs of students, since they very often reflect societal concerns or at least problems within the universities. Because the students are among the few articulate segments of the population, they are in a way a barometer for larger groups. Academic authorities must, of course, ensure the normal functioning of institutions of higher education and while there are no panaceas for campus order, a combination of clear guidelines for acceptable behaviour and a willingness to listen carefully to student demands and where possible to take these demands seriously may help to ensure relative order on campus. It is particularly important to keep the university as an institution separated from political demands and campaigns even where students, and perhaps segments of the academic staff may be politically involved. It is also important for the university to impress on governmental authorities the legitimacy for free expression of ideas and even for dissent.

Academic staff in many Third World countries are politically involved. Intellectuals and those with the expertise to function effectively in a modern society inevitably gravitate to the university.²⁸ This means that intellectual ferment of all kinds — from cultural commentary to ideological theorizing — takes place in the universities and that the academic community is a center of dissent as well as of expertise. Academics are often used by government in policy making positions and for expertise. This trend can go so far as to involve so many qualified professors in government service that the universities themselves are short staffed, as has happened in Indonesia. Academic institutions often directly provide political leaders, and examples of professors serving as prime ministers, cabinet members and more often as “non-political experts” in government service are common in the Third World and frequent in industrialized nations as well.

The university's political role is complicated and generally crucial in the Third World. It provides, at the same time, expertise, opposition, and ferment. On occasion, it directly participates in political activities. Much of this political involvement is inevitable in societies which have only limited expertise and in which political consciousness is in the hands of a small proportion of the population. The challenge is to recognize the inevitable role of the university and at the same time protect its institutional and intellectual autonomy.

CURRICULUM

Curricular patterns of higher education differ greatly from country to country, and even within nations. Traditionally, it has been the prerogative of the academic community to develop a curriculum and the teaching programs to support it. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the early universities was autonomy to develop a curriculum and to certify that students had fulfilled the requirements for academic degrees.²⁹ In the Third World, curricular

patterns were generally imposed from the outside due either to direct colonial rule or to the adopting of foreign academic models. The challenge for Third World universities is to develop a curriculum that reflects development needs and the particular circumstances of the country.

No Third World nation has successfully discarded the basic Western organizational patterns of the university, and relatively few have made major curricular innovations. The problems are immense. Not only does tradition weigh heavily, but most academic staff were trained using Western curricular models. There is a lack of textbooks and other teaching materials for innovative programs. Curricular reform is often expensive. And the academic community is often under great pressure to "produce" graduates for national development. Thus, there is little time, money or inclination to break with tradition even where it is recognized that established patterns are at least partly irrelevant.

But the curriculum remains a virtually unexamined aspect of Third World higher education that urgently needs attention. In a sense, higher education is only as good as its teachers and the curriculum. The tremendous demands of growth have, for the most part, meant that both the teaching community and the curriculum have been ignored. There is no doubt that a curriculum designed for students in Britain or the United States may not be strictly relevant for Nigeria, India or Zimbabwe. Consideration of this important element of the higher equation is only now beginning. Efforts in a number of countries may be useful to study before undertaking major curriculum reform. The development of the institutes of technology in India and their curricular planning may be useful. The various Chinese experiments with work-study and other curricular innovations may also be useful. Efforts in Tanzania and Cuba at making higher education more relevant to national needs are worth consideration. It is, in the last analysis, surprising that so little has been done in the area of curricular innovation and reform in Third World higher education.

CONCLUSION

This essay has considered some major themes relating to Third World higher education in the 1980s in an effort to indicate how these universities fit into an international framework and what the experience of other countries can contribute to understanding and then dealing with specific problems. The experience of other countries seldom yields directly applicable solutions to problems. Indeed, the history of "institutional borrowing" has not been a particularly happy one, due in large part to the forced nature of the transfer of institutional models during the colonial period. The international intellectual situation is one of inequality and resolutions of UNESCO will not basically change this anatomy of inequality. An important first step is to understand the nature of the inequality and to work to minimize it in terms of national academic planning.

The challenges facing Third World universities are not unique. They are in many respects related to the problems found in many industrialized nations, and there are many similarities among Third World nations themselves. Indeed, there is an immense need for Third World nations to learn from their own experiences, to develop regional networks and to communicate among themselves. It is unfortunate that the relatively few examples of direct regional co-operation, such as the University of East Africa and the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland did not prove successful. Thus, while there is probably relatively little that can be directly applied, broader perspectives, and even the examples of failures of particular policies can be instructive.

What, then can be learned from the comparative study of higher education? Some general themes can be discerned from this essay.

- The curriculum has, in the Third World remained one of the least frequently examined aspects of the higher education enterprise, yet there is widespread agreement that change is needed.
- Student activism is widespread in the Third World despite the fact that activism is at a low ebb in the industrialized countries. Countries have dealt with student political activism in different ways, and there may be useful lessons. It is important to understand that student activism is probably an inevitable factor in Third World higher education.
- Universities are almost by definition involved politically in the Third World. Individual academics, interest groups and others are engaged in politics in countries where the political structures are generally not fully developed.
- The path to university reform is a difficult one, and in few countries has academic change been very successful. In this regard, the examples of failures in many countries may be instructive.

- In almost all Third World nations, public and governmental expectations for higher education has exceeded performance, in most likelihood because these expectations have been unrealistic. A careful examination of the practical contributions of higher education to development must be a part of realistic planning.
 - Expansion has been a hallmark of higher education development in almost every Third World nation. This expansion has had different implications in different contexts and policies have varied from country to country. It is important to look at the nature — and the results — of expansion.
 - The experience of those Third World nations which achieved independence early or which were never under direct colonial rule — countries like India, Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, Ethiopia and the nations of Latin America, may be instructive for the newer Third World nations. Some of these nations may provide useful expertise to assist in the development process.
- These are but a few insights which the study of comparative higher education can bring to the problems and challenges faced by Third World universities. Without question, the experience of others can be useful and the lessons of the past and other nations may help to broaden perspectives and inform policy decisions. At the very least, expensive errors might well be avoided.

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5. See Philip G. Altbach and Robert O. Berdahl, eds., *Higher Education in American Society*, (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus, 1981) for a detailed analysis of the issues of autonomy and accountability in the American context.
6. Advocates of "deschooling" and of "non-formal education" have in general been critical of the role of higher education and have urged that post-secondary education have less emphasis in education budgets.
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