

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN PROMOTING COOPERATION BETWEEN SOCIAL AND PURE

By Fredrick Muyia Nafukho*

INTRODUCTION

(3) the development objectives of African countries with special emphasis on Kenya; (4) the functions of universities in the process of human development in Kenya; and (5) problems confronting universities and how they should be addressed.

DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN KENYA

The development of university education in Kenya dates back to 1956

when the Royal Technical College of East Africa (now the University of Nairobi), was established primarily to educate the children of white settlers. Later, and until 1961, the Institute provided commercial and technical education to

(called the *Mackay Report of 1981*) on the second university. Kenyatta College, which had been absorbed by the University of Nairobi and made a normal university for the training of teachers, became Kenya's third university in 1985, taking the name Kenyatta University. In 1987, Egerton College, also a constituent unit of the University of Nairobi, became the nation's fourth university. In 1990, the government upgraded the status of four colleges and made them universities. Laikipia Teachers College became a constituent college of Egerton University; Jomo Kenyatta College of Agriculture and Technology became a constituent college of Kenyatta University; and the Siriba Teachers' College and Government Training Institute, which is now Maseno University College, became a constituent college of Moi University. During the same period, the former Moi Teachers' College at Chepkoilel became a constituent college of Moi University. In 1993, the government upgraded Jomo Kenyatta University College of Agriculture and Technology to a full-fledged university, bringing the total number of state universities to five. Since independence, university expansion in Kenya has been quite rapid. In addition to the expansion of facilities (i.e. infrastructure) enrollments have also increased significantly. In fact the

spending on it was equivalent to investment in the future of the new country. Although several institutions (e.g., government ministries, parastatal agencies, etc.) were established after independence to help direct the country's development effort, it was generally believed that the university would be the foremost development institution in the country. First, the university was expected to train the manpower for development. Second, its professors were expected to conduct research and provide policymakers with relevant development advice so that appropriate policies could be adopted for national development. Finally,

significant unemployment among highly trained individuals. Many individuals and their families have seen an investment in a European education as important for long-term economic mobility for their children and for their families. Thus, many of them have made significant sacrifices to make certain that their children obtained the necessary education. Unfortunately, due to developments beyond their control, most of these graduates cannot find the jobs they were training for, endangering returns to their families' investments. Policy makers in Kenya have viewed education in similar fashion, hoping that increased investment in skills will pay-off in the long run through greater job creation and expanded development.⁹ Unfortunately, while educational opportunities have expanded and more Kenyans have graduated from universities, the economy has not kept up with this increase in graduation rates. The consequence has been significant increases in the unemployment and underemployment rates among university-trained personnel. As a result, many Kenyans are beginning to question the government's continued investment in higher education. Unfortunately, continued investment in higher education is Kenya's best hope for sustainable development. What is required are programs to help Kenyans change their view of higher education. Today, most people believe that a university degree is the passport to a lucrative civil service position. Thus, the concept of training individuals to become entrepreneurs and effective managers of private-sector businesses has still not caught on very well among households and students in the country. Many of the nation's young high school graduates still see the university as the place where they go to learn the skills needed to make them administrators in one of the government's several ministries or parastatal agencies. Thus, seeking and securing employment with the government is considered the primary objective of a university graduate. The emphasis should be placed on entrepreneurship and training for work in the jobs-creating private sector. Thus, instead of searching for administrative positions in the civil service, university graduates should be encouraged to start their own businesses or seek employment with existing firms in the private sector. This approach, if successful, will expand the economy and allow it to improve its ability to absorb university graduates. Such an approach will also help the university function as an enhancer of development and not the creator of unemployment in the country. The economic miracle that has taken place in countries like Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia can be explained by investments in human capital that have

ers have now encouraged the education system to invest more in pure sciences where manpower is lacking, while investing less in social sciences. Students are being discouraged from taking subjects like history, geography, and religious education. The danger of this approach to education is that Kenyan society may end up under-investing in these crucial areas. Development encompasses social, economic, political, religious, environmental, physical, and technological dimensions. Kenyan society, like any other society in the world, requires well-balanced individuals and the education system should promote an integrated educational system that allows graduates to be well informed on both the social

Nafukho / The Role of Universities in Promoting Human Development in Kenya

- put science and technology in the service of development by reinforcing the autonomous capacity of our countries in this field;
- achieve self-sufficiency in food production and supply;
- implement completely the programs for the United National Transport and communications decade for transport;
- realize the sub-regional and regional internally located industrial development;
- cooperate in the field of natural resource control, exploration, extrac-

Through education, research is carried out to confirm or modify what is known and to extend the frontiers of knowledge. We know that developed nations such as the US and UK have now gone beyond the industrial age and are now in the information age. Knowledge is the engine that is driving the world we live in and universities have a major role to play in the creation of a knowledge-based society.

Kenyan policy makers must be aware of the fact that human development involves the complex interaction of several factors and its planning and management has to involve ideas from social and pure sciences. It is only in the universities that personnel in various disciplines are involved in educational

ties in Kenya have a role to play in the promotion of literacy. They should launch adult and continuing education programs to be offered by rural centers under their guidance. University lecturers should write books on many topics including health and hygiene; and organize special radio and television programs to improve the level of literacy in Kenya. In addition, they should find ways to promote the use of indigenous languages in instruction in the universities and at other levels of education. This should improve the ability of Kenyans to benefit from education at all levels.¹⁶

For any society to be considered developed, social and economic dimensions of development must be addressed. Currently, there is fear that some groups of people in Kenya, like the Maasai, are disappearing because of dominance by the larger groups. There is need to safeguard the languages and cultures of the minority groups from extinction. This should be part of the over-

all process to promote and sustain indigenous languages and cultures. Minority ethnic groups should have an opportunity to develop and sustain their languages and cultures. This is only possible if people from these communities are included in the literacy campaign. Literacy in this instance, however, should not be interpreted to mean the ability to read and write English or some foreign language. Universities in Kenya can help these minority groups preserve their languages and cultures through research, documentation, and preservation of the cultural heritage of these communities and peoples.

To ensure cooperation between social and pure scientists, universities in Kenya should contribute a lot to more effective communication among disciplines at the national and international levels. There is need for interdisciplinary journals that should be circulated among the faculty and produced continuously. The faculty should encourage public debates on seminal topics; and conduct workshops, seminars and conferences on topics of current interest to academics and the larger society. For example in the Kenyan education system, subjects such as history, geography, and religion are dying since they are optional. University lecturers should take a lead in advising policy makers on the importance of studying the humanities.

THE ODDS FACING KENYAN UNIVERSITIES

This paper has shown that universities in Kenya can play a major role

Nafukho / The Role of Universities in Promoting Human Development in Kenya

edge, teaching and provision of general services to the community, they require sufficient funds. The institutions are funded primarily by the government and do

setting up of income generating activities for the universities, to reduce their dependence on state funding.²² In addition, public universities in Kenya should have close partnerships with domestic industries as this will benefit the universities themselves, the students and the industrial sector.²³ The institutions should have autonomy in their administration and academic freedom must be

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

ate Level," *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 3, 1, (1996), pp. 17-23.

22. United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 1992*

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

sity Students with the Introduction of University Fees Payment," *Journal of Eastern African Research and Development*. 24, (1994), pp. 42-53.

24. Muyia Nafukho, "The Need for Optimal Mix of Theoretical Instruction and Practical Work Experience in Kenyan Public Universities," *Proceedings of Kenya DAAD Scholars National Conference on Strengthening the Relationship between the Universities and Industry* (Nairobi, November 28-December 1 1995) pp. 43-47