

## Chapter VIII

### Prospects for the Development of Higher Education in Kenya\*

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It is important that any consideration of prospects for the development of higher education in Kenya be understood within the more general context of the East African region. Consequently, in the first part of this discussion I describe the economic and social development context of East Africa. Then, I draw on the more general context of the African continent, summarizing several major issues that have been identified by various experts as being of contemporary significance for the continued growth and development of African higher education. This leads to a discussion of five major themes that I believe are particularly important for Kenya, followed by some concluding suggestions for the future development of its university system.

#### The Regional Development Context: East Africa

Kenya and its neighboring East African countries are in a very poor economic condition, as is shown in Table 1. Kenya is just above the mean in per capita GNP for low- and middle income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, but all of the bordering countries except Sudan are considerably below the regional mean. Kenya is the 23rd poorest nation in the world, but all of its East African neighbors

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Table 1

Development Status of Countries in East Africa

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Country/Region	Rank	1989 per Capita GNP	1989 Life Expectancy at Birth	1985 Adult Illiteracy		Rate of Population Growth
				Women	All	
Ethiopia	2	\$ 120	48 yrs	-	38%	3.4%
Kenya	23	\$ 360	59 yrs	51%	41%	3.4%
Somalia	4	\$ 170	48 yrs	94%	88%	3.1%
Sudan	40	\$ 550	50 yrs	- -	- -	2.8%
Tanzania	3	\$ 130	49 yrs	- -	- -	3.3%
Uganda	14	\$ 250	49 yrs	55%	43%	3.5%
Low- and Middle-Income SubSaharan Africa		\$ 340	51 yrs	65%	52%	3.2%

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Source: World Bank. 1991. World Development Report 1991. New York: Oxford University Press.

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are even poorer. The region is also characterized by high rates of adult illiteracy. Hence, it is important that there be serious consideration of investment that will enhance the capacity of universities in the region to further national development. It is anticipated that the Treaty for East African Cooperation, signed 30 November 1993, will facilitate cooperative work among universities in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. This treaty specifically identifies education, research, and communications as important areas for cooperation.

### **Background: Issues in African Higher Education**

African leaders and higher education experts who participated in seminars held in Accra, Ghana, in 1991 (UNESCO, 1992), and in Dakar, Senegal, in 1992 (UNESCO, 1993), identified ten major areas of concern about the current status and future prospects of African higher education. The following summarizes the observations and recommendations made as a result of these seminars (Consultation of Experts on Future Trends and Challenges of Higher Education in Africa, 1992):

- (1). **Mission of Higher Education in African Society.** There is a need to build institutions that are truly oriented toward the development of African societies and the promotion of African cultures. This will require greater efforts at producing the kinds of graduates who will not only be adaptable to the rapidly changing needs of African society but also contribute to innovation and development.
- (2). **Access to Higher Education:** Rapid increases in enrolments have occurred without consideration of the distribution of students by discipline and the extent to which current patterns will satisfy African manpower needs. Guidance and counseling of students should take African development needs into account along with more careful attention to the ability and aptitude of entering students.
- (3). **Women's Access to Higher Education:** The participation of women in African higher education is very low compared to many countries. This is in large part due to traditional cultural values that emphasize women's roles as wife and mother. Specific actions should be taken to encourage the continuation of girls and women through primary and secondary school. Both material and academic incentives should be offered that will facilitate their entrance into and successful completion of higher education.
- (4). **Quality and Content of Education.** There are serious problems in Africa with the quality of instruction, the size of classes, availability of up-to-date materials and equipment, the relevance of the curriculum to current conditions, and the integration of higher education with the world of work. Higher education institutions should begin to provide pedagogical training to their teachers as well as to their graduate students seeking to become teachers at the tertiary level. Students should have opportunities to experience the world of work through such experiences as internships, cooperative placements with employers in their field of study, and off-term jobs. Specific plans should also be developed for the acquisition of needed materials and equipment.
- (5). **Harmonization of Curricula and Academic Mobility:** Mobility among countries in Africa is hindered by the "critical mismatch between curricula and societal needs," and the "lack of mutual recognition" of academic degrees and qualifications. Institutions need to "intensify information exchange." Member states should "ratify and effectively enforce the Arusha Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and other Qualifications."
- (6). **Inter-University Cooperation and Pooling of Resources:** Institutions of higher education in Africa are more inclined toward developing joint activities with countries in the North rather than with their African neighbors. They should join forces to develop "centres of excellence" in Africa and seek external resources that would facilitate this process such as the UNESCO UNITWIN and UNESCO Chairs programmes.
- (7). **Higher Education as a Factor of Social Change:** There is a need to recognize the unique contributions that African higher education institutions have made to the adoption of innovation in a variety of fields. Greater efforts should be made to strengthen the contribution of higher education to "innovation, especially in the promotion of endogenous technologies and cultural heritage."
- (8). **Teachers' Status:** Teachers in African universities continue to be underpaid in comparison to those with similar qualifications working in other economic sectors. This has contributed to "brain drain" as highly respected academics have been sought by other universities and left Africa for different parts of the world. Efforts must be made to upgrade academic salaries so

that teachers will not be motivated to leave higher education in search of higher pay and status. (9). Research: Research "should keep abreast with teaching and should help to raise the quality of higher education, in particular, and of social life, in general." The contributions of research in Africa, however, are hindered by the lack of adequate resources and limited applicability to societal needs. Attention must be paid to (a) improving both basic and applied research, (b) furthering work on advanced technologies of critical social and economic need in Africa, (c) improving the preparation of researchers, (d) setting up "adequate structures for the coordination, dissemination and publication of research results," (e) working to make research activities an integral part of institutions' public service functions, and (f) reducing duplication through inter-institutional cooperation involving both researchers and facilities. (10). Financing: Government budgets in Africa have been inadequate to fund the actual needs of institutions. Higher education should be given a major priority because of its significance for social and economic development. In addition, institutions should seek to diversify their funding base through a variety of *cost-recovery* measures such as rental of facilities, charging fees for services to non-university constituencies, and contracting for professional consulting services.

### **Higher Education in Kenya: Significant Themes**

The foregoing list of issues suggests five themes which are particularly significant when considering the future of higher education in Kenya. Not surprisingly, these five themes also appear throughout recently published materials on higher education in Africa: (1) access and gender equity (Alele-Williams, 1992; Lamptey, 1992); (2) increasing the use of technology to improve management, instruction, and research (Fall, 1992); (3) providing continuing professional development for academic staff (both teaching and research) and administrators (Mohammedhai, 1992; M. Thiam, 1992); (4) establishing the capacity for reform and innovation through systematic planning and policy analysis (Taiwo, 1992); and (5) diversifying finance (Koso-Thomas, 1992). (1). Access and Gender Equity: With respect to access to education, virtually all (94%) children in Kenya enter primary school. However, only half of the original entering students are still enrolled at the end of primary school. Since just half of the primary school graduates gain admission to secondary school, there is an effective secondary school enrolment ratio of 24% of the nation's young people of secondary school age (Opondo & Noormohamed, 1989, p. 88). In 1990, there were enough available university places for just 7.5% of the secondary school graduates (Mwiria & Nyukuri, 1992, pp. 17-18), therefore the effective university enrolment ratio was less than 2% of university age Kenyans. Despite the rapid expansion of enrolments in higher education in Kenya over the thirty years since independence that is shown in Table 2, the system still can accommodate only a very small fraction of the nation's young people.

According to Table 2, virtually equal numbers of boys and girls begin primary school in Kenya. However, by secondary school, there are 1.33 boys for every girl. The public university sex ratio is double that of secondary schools at 2.68 males for every female! Only for the Teachers' College sector of higher education is there reasonable gender equity (1.15 males per female). There are many cultural reasons for the low participation of women in African higher education, especially traditional family patterns which emphasize that the proper role of women is to stay in the home and care for their families (Alele- Williams, 1992). Parents often discourage their daughters from obtaining advanced education (beginning as early as the transition from primary into secondary school) because they believe potential husbands will not be interested in marrying highly educated women (Lamptey, 1992).

Many strategies for increasing the participation of women in higher education have been advocated, e.g., counseling and the creation of awareness of educational opportunities among girls, reorienting attitudes of male counterparts, changing attitudes of parents, reforming organizational management practices that exclude women from senior administrative posts in African higher education, development of an indigenous women's movement, and government promulgation and enforcement of affirmative action policies

(Lamprey, 1992). There continues to be much room for improvement with respect to gender equity in Kenyan higher education.

Table 3 shows the distribution of academic courses of study for first-time undergraduates who enrolled in 1992/93. For both genders, the most popular courses were BEd. (Arts) and Arts. The combination of Science and B.Ed.(Science) was the next most popular, also for both genders. Only for B.Ed. (Home Economics/Home Science Technology) did women outnumber men, and there were almost equal numbers choosing Cultural Studies. While an arts (social science or humanities) emphasis was being pursued by almost half of all undergraduates entering Kenyan public universities in 1992/93, there were also substantial numbers studying science, engineering, and business management/commerce. This distribution of academic courses suggests that the universities are contributing to the goal of educating students according to their expressed academic interests as well as filling the high-level manpower needs of a developing nation. (2). Increased Use of Technology: Most African universities have very limited access to modern computing and communications technology, so it is increasingly difficult for teachers and students to keep abreast of current developments in their academic areas. As financial constraints and the complexity of managing financial resources increase, having access to relevant computer soft- and hardware could greatly improve financial management in African higher education. Universities should also be in the forefront of helping to plan and develop national and international communication systems in order to facilitate rapid dissemination of information as well as to keep up-to-date with current literature in the academic disciplines (Fall, 1992). Given the budget constraints of most African universities, it is important to investigate technological needs from both an intra- and an inter-institutional perspective so that strategies for equipment acquisition and seeking donor funding can maximize their impact across the entire range of instructional (including library), research, and public service activities. Of course, advanced communications technology requires access to a reliable, efficient, and affordably priced telephone system. Improving Kenya's outmoded telecommunications system should be a major government priority. (3). Continuing Professional Development of Academic Staff (Teaching and Research) and Administrators: It has been suggested that the quality of research produced in African universities is rather poor, not only due to the lack of adequate facilities, but also because teachers are not well-prepared to do research (M. Thiam, 1992). Consideration must be given to the strategies that might be used to improve research training, including the advantages and disadvantages of sending people abroad for study as opposed to organizing local training programs and the consequences of each for "brain drain" (the failure of highly trained personnel to return to Kenya following completion of their programs). Academic staff must also remain up-to-date in their knowledge of the fields in which they are teaching (M. Thiam, 1992). Because of limited student access to textbooks and other instructional materials, academic staff in many fields must deliver the primary content of courses through classroom instruction. Consequently, it is very important that teachers be skilled in the pedagogy of higher education, especially those aspects unique to higher education in the African context. (4). Establishing Capacity for Reform and Innovation: Because the postcolonial history of African higher education is relatively brief, it is important to build the capacity for continual reform and innovation so that vitality and productivity can be enhanced (Taiwo, 1992). This might encompass developing alternative modes of instructional delivery (including distance education); evaluation and use of results to modify programs (including paying attention to content and facility duplication); and developing strategies for the acquisition and maintenance of necessary instructional materials and equipment. It would also include forging more democratic governance structures in which teachers, other staff, and even students participate in significant decision-making processes such as the recommendation of candidates for administrative appointments.

Table 2  
Kenya Education Trends by Type of Institution, 1963-1992 (Selected Years)

	1963	1973	1983	1986	1987	1992
<b>Primary Schools</b>						
No. of Schools	6,058	6,932	11,966	13,347	13,849	15,465
Total Enrolment (in thousands)	892	1,816	4,324	4,84	5,031	5,530
Sex Ratio *	192	130	108	108	107	103
<b>Secondary Schools</b>						
No. of Schools	151	964	2,230	2,417	2,592	2,632
Total Enrolment	30,120	174,767	493,710	458,712	522,261	621,443
Sex Ratio *	215	204	148	141	144	133
<b>Teachers' Colleges **</b>						
No. of Institutions	37	21	21	22	22	29
Total Enrolment	4,119	8,905	13,657	15,644	7,817	19,154
Sex Ratio *						133
<b>National Polytechnics</b>						
No. of Institutions	1	2	2	2	3	3
Total Enrolment	864	3,721	5,398	5,313	5,186	9,029
<b>Institutes of Technology</b>						
No. of Institutions		1	4	16	16	17
Total Enrolment		110	456	4,694	4,248	5,633
<b>Government Universities ***</b>						
No. of Institutions	1	1	1	4	4	4
Total Enrolment	571	5,149	9,223	10,143	17,538	40,748
Sex Ratio *						270

Notes: \* Males per 100 females.

\*\* The drop in number of institutions was due to conversion of some into secondary schools. By 1992, these colleges prepared only primary school teachers.

\*\*\* "Double intakes" of new students (secondary school graduates from two consecutive year cohorts admitted and enrolling at the same time) occurred in 1987/88 and 1990/91.

Sources: Republic of Kenya. 1994. *Development Plan, 1994-1996*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

Republic of Kenya. 1989. *Development Plan, 1989-1993*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

Republic of Kenya. 1993. *Economic Survey 1993*. Central Bureau of Statistics, Office of the Vice President, and Ministry of Planning and National Development. Nairobi: Government Printer.

Reform and innovation need to be based on a firm foundation of planning and policy analysis. A wide variety of statistical data are collected routinely by the government, but they tend not to be used for systematic analysis. There needs to be better use of the many knowledgeable and highly skilled academics in Kenyan universities for providing expert advice on policy options. There has been a tendency to bring in external consultants to do projects that could be done by people already working in Kenya. Examples are the three research projects recently let for bid by the Kenya Commission for Higher Education, using World Bank *loan* funds: (a) graduate labor market survey (focus on employment-

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Table 3

education, this is not entirely fair because other international agencies (most notably, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) are staunch advocates of "structural adjustment" policies. These policies require that national budgets be structured in such a way that the broad spectrum of national development needs are addressed. What this has meant, in practice, is pressure on developing countries to reduce expenditures in historically high-cost areas such as education and human services so that more funds can be allocated to other development needs, e.g., making infrastructure (especially transportation, communication, and resource management) improvements that are necessary to facilitate national development.

It cannot be said that the government in Kenya is failing to spend a significant amount on higher education. To the contrary, in 1992/93 higher education was allocated 19% of the total national *recurrent budget* and just over half (56%) of the government's *development* (e.g., funds for buildings, equipment, and other capital investment) budget (Republic of Kenya, 1993, p. 184). Clearly, the government of Kenya is conforming to external expectations that its budgetary policies reflect efforts at structural adjustment. Even so, higher education is being funded much more generously than any other level of education. Table 4 shows Kenya government expenditures per student in 1992/93, calculated by dividing the Ministry of Education *recurrent* budget figures (Republic of Kenya, 1993, p.184) by the enrolment figures shown in Table 2. According to Table 4, national *recurrent* expenditures per student in public universities for 1992/93 were *46 times higher than those for each primary school student*.

However, in the context of African Higher education, Kenya's expenditures are not unusual. Sanyal and Martin (1991) describe "the relatively high cost of African higher education" as follows:

...cost of a graduate of Sub-Saharan Africa, according to one estimate is eight times GNP per capita whereas it is only 3.7 times the GNP per capita for all the developing countries combined (Mingat and Psacharopoulos, 1985). The ratio between unit costs in higher and in primary education varies between 30:1 and 50:1 in African countries as against 10:1 in Asia or Latin America (Hinchcliffe, 1987).

It must be noted that projected 1992/93 government "development" expenditures for universities were quite high and, hence, may not be repeated in the near future. Taking both the *recurrent* and *development* parts of the Ministry of Education budget together, per capita expenditures per student in public universities were an astonishing *68 times greater than those for each primary school student*.

Despite the overall decrease between 1987/88 and 1992/93 in the proportion of total government funding for education, the per capita student expenditure ratio between university and primary education, when based on *recurrent* expenditures only, did not change between 1987/88 when it was 47 (Opondo & Noormohamed, 1989, p. 92) and 1992/93 when it was 46. Given this pattern, it is unlikely that the proportion of government expenditures allocated to higher education will increase significantly. Consequently, it is necessary for universities to begin exploring alternative sources of funds and developing strategies of "cost-sharing." Ten options for "widening and diversifying sources of finance" (Woodhall, 1993, pp. 8-10; 1991) are (a) charging students for tuition and/or other types of fees (e.g., registration, examination, etc.); (b) charging students a larger share of actual board and lodging costs (including reducing governmental stipends for student housing and other personal expenses); (c) encouraging the establishment and growth of private institutions within a context of effective government regulation (James, 1991); (d) deferred cost recovery (e.g., payroll tax paid by employers of graduates); (e) work-study aid or national service programs; (f) business sponsorship of students; (g) contracting for consulting and applied research with industry, commerce, and government; (h) sales of goods and services; (i) private contributions and endowments, including gifts from alumni and staff as well as from business and industry; and (j) student loans or other forms of deferred payment.

In Kenya, only 20-25 percent of students ever pay back their loans (Woodhall, 1991, p.55). This is unfortunate, since repayment replenishes the loan fund, and as such, can be thought of as an investment in future generations of students who will be contributing to national development. The failure to recover loan funds from Kenyan students is due to lack of both strong legal sanctions and an effective collection agency. If cost-sharing and cost-effectiveness are underlying goals, a higher education student loan program should have the following characteristics:

First, a deferred payment program requires the participation of a *credible collection institution with incentives to collect*, which in most instances required the direct participation of commercial banks, a taxation department or a social security agency... Second, with loans, there must be a willingness to charge interest rates equal to or above *inflation* in order to minimize subsidies.. Third, the relationship between necessary repayments and the likely income of students must be examined to ensure that repayment burdens never pose an *excessive burden* on graduates...Fourth, developing a means of *targeting* support to needier and more academically deserving students will be crucial to a program's efficiency.. Fifth, loan losses can be justified if there are *potential social gains* that would not be reflected in a graduate's income (Albrecht & Zideman, 1992, p. 100).

Institutions *must be financially autonomous*, as well as able to control and monitor their own expenditures (preferably with a computerized financial accounting system). They must also be able to keep revenue generated and not return it to the government or have subsequent budget allocations reduced by the amount of the revenue (Woodhall, 1993, p.12). Institutions must also receive their funds (government allocation, other revenue) in a *timely and regular way* (Passi, 1992). It is important to emphasize that cost recovery is not meant to substitute for effective government funding policy which provides funds for investment in tandem with funds for systematic maintenance of facilities and equipment, for acquisition of library materials and teaching resources, and for institutional development:

...in practice, cost recovery operates in tandem with, and complements, state subsidy of higher education. Characterizing a system as one of cost recovery in practice relates to the breadth of student coverage of fees and their size in relation to costs (Albrecht and Zideman, 1992, p. 11).

## **Discussion**

With respect to each of the foregoing significant themes, Kenya is making progress but much remains to be done. Access and gender equity in the public universities are still not at the levels that one would wish to see in a developing country. Because there are places for less than 2% of the eligible age cohort to attend university, it is im0.19o

but approaches need to be varied and oriented toward pressing problems of teaching, research and administration in higher education. There also must be a purposive mix of in-country and foreign training programs. Kenya has received a loan from the World Bank (Universities Investment Project) which is being used for training higher education staff as well as to acquire books and scientific equipment. Further, institutions need to look beyond themselves to build regional coalitions that enlist the expertise of academic and administrative

Table 4  
Kenya Recurrent Expenditures Per Student by Level of Education, 1992/93 \*

Level	Enrolment	Education Ministry Recurrent Budget (Kenya Pounds)	Per Student Expenditure (Kenya Pounds) **
Primary Education	5,530,000	346,330,000	62.63
Secondary Education	621,443	97,240,000	156.47
Teachers' Colleges	18,992	12,870,000	677.65
Public Universities	41,062	118,620,000	2888.80

Notes: \* All data are "provisional," i.e., government estimates (in recent years, very close to final figures).

\*\* 1 Kenya Pound = 20 Kenya Shillings.

Source: Republic of Kenya. 1993. *Economic Survey 1993*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

staff from the universities within Kenya as well as from neighboring countries in Africa (King, 1990).

Building the capacity for reform and innovation depends, in part, on the development of planning and policy analytical skills at both the institutional and national levels. It also requires that universities have sufficient autonomy to be able to pursue initiatives without government intervention as well as to control their own affairs. More participatory governance structures are necessary. Saint (1992, p. 71) identifies the following three areas of particular importance for African higher education, more generally, that are also relevant for Kenya:

Existing governance structures need to be strengthened, and new ones created if necessary, to make them more sensitive to the needs of all the university's stakeholders. Greater dialogue among the university's various constituent groups, at both formal and informal levels, is desirable. Improved information flows between university administration and its staff and students is needed

Institutional staff and students should have a significant voice in the appointment of administrators. Even though all administrative appointments are ultimately made by the Chancellor of the public universities (under current law, the President of Kenya), academic and non-academic staff as well as students should play more than a token role in the selection process. Because of this strong influence, it is often difficult for stakeholders in higher education to communicate concerns without having them construed as being criticisms of the government. Consequently, it is sometimes difficult to engage in the dialogue necessary for addressing the problems. The unwillingness of the President to meet with representatives of academic staff seeking formal government recognition for their union led to an unauthorized

strike felt primarily at the universities located in the Nairobi metropolitan area. Under such conditions, academic freedom can also be threatened

Finally, it is incumbent upon universities to develop a broader funding base so that they are not entirely dependent upon the government. It is certainly reasonable to expect the government to pay a substantial portion of faculty salaries and benefits (especially health care and pension contributions), but costs of most things must be shared, with student fees being a more significant source of funds. Better ties must be forged with the private sector which also benefits greatly from highly educated manpower. The government of Kenya needs to find better ways to collect loan payments in order to make certain that future generations can benefit from the fund created through loan repayment.

Kenya has a stable government, good relationships with neighboring East African countries cemented by a recently signed treaty for cooperation, and renewed support from the international donor community. All of these bode well for a promising future in which higher education can play a significant role. There is, however, a need to improve governance structures so that there can be significant dialogue both among stakeholders and with the government. It is up to members of the university community to make certain that the human resources and expertise represented therein are utilized as fully as possible in the service not only of personal goals, but also to facilitate local, regional, and national development.

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