

Introduction

The Working Group on Finance and Education (WGFE) held in 2004 two policy dialogue conferences on education. The first conference underscored the endemic crisis West African higher education systems have perpetually been confronted with since the outset of the post colonial period. As for the second one, it dealt with the challenges posed by the financing and planning of education in Africa, and focused especially on issues and challenges as well as future perspectives for educational systems at large. In fact, the choice for these two policy dialogue topics was an obvious one at a time when numerous African educational systems are beset with serious problems and when all evidence clearly points to the fact that the quality of teaching and learning at all levels of education from kindergarten to graduate school is dramatically declining. Indeed, this choice fulfils the fundamental preoccupation of the WGFE geared toward generating research and analytical work and initiating discussions on key issues confronting the sector that seriously impede the orderly growth and planned development of education in sub-Saharan Africa.

Nearly half a century after the conquest of political independence by the vast majority of sub-Saharan African countries, the University whether designed and operated by the African leadership¹ or the colonial masters (i.e., the University of Dakar, Senegal and the University Ibadan, Nigeria) became dysfunctional on several grounds: structure, modus operandi, quality and content of curriculum, student intake as well as funding. Whether the university was established less than ten years ago (i.e., the University of the Gambia circa 2002 or the University of Bamako circa 1996), or has been in existence for nearly fifty years (i.e., the University of Yaoundé, Cameroon) or over a century (i.e., Fourra Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone), the African institution of higher learning is unequivocally beset with serious structural, cyclical, recurrent, violent or even destructive crises that seriously handicap its harmonious growth.

In a context of continuous decline in the internal and external efficiency of educational systems in general and higher education in particular, a number of key questions comes to mind: How do the maturity crises that affect the system emerge and develop and in what ways do the recurring occurrences of these crises impact the types and levels of education and by extension the major sectors of the national economy that are big users of human resources? How do they impede the development initiatives of the countries involved? Do these crises find their origin in the inability of the institutions of higher education (IHEs) to adapt to their environment and renew themselves as learning

organizations? Are there other endogenous or exogenous causes that constitute powerful negative factors to the development and the harmonious growth of these top training and research social institutions?

The various papers presented by four West African scholars at the first policy dialogue conference jointly organized by the WGFE and the Sénégalaise de Management et de Consultance (SENCOMANE) within the framework of the first International Conference on Education and Training (EDUFORM)—highlights the experiences of Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal. The four contributions are an original attempt to provide answers to all these questions and cast a new and critical look into the multifaceted and multidimensional aspects of the crisis facing the African IHE. In a word, they demonstrate cogently that the crisis that is profoundly affecting higher education in its very soul, body as well as its historical, legal, social, economic and academic foundations negatively impacts its triple mission of training the African elite (optimization of the critical ownership of knowledge), research (contribution to knowledge production and dissemination) and community service (control and valorisation of knowledge).

The second policy dialogue conference topic entitled 'Challenges of Financing and Planning of Education in Africa: What Works and What Does Not Work', went hand in hand with the identification of sub-topics focused on the various aspects of educational finance in sub-Saharan Africa, mainly those related to non formal, secondary and higher education. The thematic areas of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) on the African continent were not covered in an in-depth manner at the policy dialogue conference. Nonetheless, they were not entirely overlooked since they were underscored in the discussions en passant.

The choice for the conference topic of educational finance and planning by the WGFE was dictated by a number of key considerations. First of all, one may convincingly argue that the accomplishment of the Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015 depends, to a large extent, on the magnitude, optimal and efficient utilization of the financial resources mobilized for this purpose. Given the fact that developed countries did not hold all the commitments they made to education regarding the financial resource mobilization and allocation to countries having designed credible education development plans and that are in the process of implementing them, African governments must raise the complementary funding required for reaching the priorities and objectives set. Thus, it is interesting to draw their attention on the paramount

importance of allocating at least 4 per cent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 20 percent of their national budget to the education sector whose financing is, of course, an integral part of their constitutional responsibility.

Second, it is quite recognized that education, a long term productive investment for both the individual and society at large, contributes in a significant manner to economic growth and the development of a country. One comes easily to the conclusion that the externalities of education have a positive impact on numerous sectors, including health and agriculture just to name a few. Thus, it is imperative to infuse a significant amount of financial resources in the educational system to facilitate the access of all the different segments of the population, especially the poorest, to a quality education and to help the formation of a quality and performing human capital whose contribution to economic development is crucial.

Third and finally, the allocation of adequate levels of funding to the sector and the design and implementation of coherent and sustainable educational development plans may contribute to the gradual and controlled expansion of the educational system as a whole. It should be pointed out that the responsibility of the ruling elite regarding the realization of this task is formidable and must not fail.

This monograph naturally consists of two sections. The first part deals with the contributions about the Crisis of Higher Education in Anglophone and Francophone West Africa. The choice for many observation sites and different higher education traditions enable the participants to share experiences and contextualize the discussions with a view of getting to a better and in-depth understanding of the issue at hand. The first paper that relates to this section deals with the Crisis of Higher Education in Burkina Faso. It is given by Professor Adama Saba of the University of Ouagadougou and highlights the historic evolution of higher education in this country, discusses the profound changes that it has experienced over the past four decades, underscores the contradictions between the ruling political classes and the intelligentsia, and suggests the way forward for the Faso higher education system.

The second paper, produced by Professor Shaka Bagayogo, is an interesting analysis of the historic evolution of higher education in Mali. It analyzes the roles and responsibilities of the *Grandes Ecoles* as the only pillar of the higher education system during the national period and underscores the dual system characterized by the existence of the *Grandes Ecoles* side by side with the University of Mali that established in 1996, subsequently became the University of Bamako in 2002. This contributor underscores the relevance of the role of the university in the socio economic

development process of Mali, in providing the required highly qualified expertise for the management of the agricultural, mining and husbandry sectors.

The third presentation that was given by Professor Kunle Amuwo of the University of Ibadan in Nigeria and the African Institute of South Africa in Pretoria, is a critique of the Bretton Woods Institutions higher education neo liberal theses. It further examines the profound contradictions between the different Nigerian political regimes and academia. In this country that totals over four hundred institutions of higher education, the contradictions concern basically issues related to the design, organization, functioning and orientation of higher education.

The fourth and last presentation that was given by Professor Ahmadou Lamine Ndiaye member of the Academy of Sciences and Techniques of Sénégal and Founding Rector of Gaston Berger University of Saint Louis. It scrutinizes the structural causes of higher education crisis in Senegal, highlights its manifestations and suggests ways out of the crisis.

The second section of the monograph consists of the presentations that deal with the Challenges of the Financing and Planning of Education in Africa. It begins with the paper on the reflections on the financing of community schools. The case of Senegal, presented by Kassa Diagne, is centered around the financing strategies of the Project for the Assistance to the Action Plan of Basic Education for Adults and Youth (PAPA). In fact, the target institution is the community school. The experience of Benin is presented by Christophe Denadi. The sub-topic that deals with the funding sources and the objectives of education sector development plans is scrutinized through three papers. Braimah Imoro's deals with Ghana and highlights the experiences of this anglophone African country regarding the design and financing of its education sector development plan. The paper presented by Dr. Aboubacar Sidiki Yattara underscores the actions undertaken by Guinea Conakry that highlight key funding strategies of this country's Education for All (EFA) plan. Alpha Aboubacrine wraps up the section with a similar presentation on Mali's experience with its ten year education development plan (PRODEC). The financing of Secondary Education in Senegal is examined by Pr. Abdoulaye Diagne and that of Benin by Paul Iko. Concerning higher education funding policies and strategies, the paper presented by Professor Mamadou Dansokho of Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar (UCAD) questions the importance of policy dialogue in the resolution of conflicts within the University. The presentation of Dr. Praveen Mohadeb of Mauritius Tertiary Education Commission is an interesting attempt to present the pros and cons of the loan scheme to students. Finally, Professor Ahmadou Lamine Ndiaye who shares his experiences concerning

the financing of a new university (Gaston Berger University) also highlights the advantages of strategic planning for a small size university such as the Gaston Berger University of Saint-Louis. The last sub-topic consists of two papers that deal respectively with public expenditure review as a way of policy dialogue between governments and development agencies is presented by Atou Seck, Consultant at the Senegal field mission of the World Bank. As for the second paper that underscores the relationships between economic

reforms and the financing of education in Africa, it was given by Pr. Adebayo Olukoshi, CODESRIA Executive Secretary. The corpus of his presentation is not available in this monograph.

Note

1. The overwhelming majority of West African Institutions of Higher Education was established during the past three decades.

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