

Sustaining Home-Grown Innovations in Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Critical Reflection

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Abstract

In the early post-colonial period, African leaders articulated in unison the necessity for promoting substantive change in their inherited systems through reforms. Paradoxically, during the same period they built new higher education institutions, especially universities, modeled after those in the former colonizing colonial powers. As the majority of these reforms were not satisfactorily implemented, since the beginning of this first decade of the twenty-first century, there has been greater interest in innovations as a more focused and promising strategy for change to improve the performance of the universities. This paper is basically a reflective essay that conceptualizes innovative strategy as a necessary and permanent corrective tool to redress and prevent institutional deficiencies. After presenting some of the African experiences in recent innovations, it examines the conditions for rooting and sustaining home-grown innovations. Given the powerful dependency framework and the external control over the financial resources, national policies are in effect set by external powers. The latter determine priorities in Africa including the type of innovations that may be considered worth being supported. It is argued that the most effective way to sustain innovations in African higher education for social progress is to create the conditions in the learning system to foster innovative minds.

Introduction

At the time of the independence movements, education in general, and particularly higher education, was expected to play a central role in the national project of social progress. Thus, issues about the nature of education for this national project at different moments of the post-colonial period were viewed within the broader framework of political ideologies spanning from pro-Western liberal ideology and capitalist systems (Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire) to Marxist-Leninist/socialist ideology (Benin, Zimbabwe) to African socialism (Mali, Tanzania). Regardless of their ideological and political choices, they all conceived higher education almost as a sufficient agent of development as imbedded in the notion of "development university" (Yesufu 1973) with the mission of formulating relevant programs and educating the human resources equipped with relevant knowledge for the actualization of the government's project of national development. They also unanimously reached the same conclusion about the lack of relevance of European-inherited education. Paradoxically,

almost at the same time that they articulated in unison the necessity for promoting substantive change through reforms they were building new higher education institutions, especially universities, modeled after those in the former colonizing countries whose languages were retained “by choice” by the African decision-makers. The majority of these reforms were not implemented due to a number of factors, including the incongruence between the goals of the reforms and social systems and a lack of political will.

Since the beginning of this first decade of the twenty-first century, contrary to the earlier search for solutions through large-scale structural change encompassed in reforms of national educational systems, there has been greater interest in what appears to be more manageable and more circumscribed change with the possibility of yielding immediate and visible results. Thus there have been experiences with innovations.

One of the major issues addressed in this paper is to critically examine conceptual issues related to the nature of the innovations introduced and how to ensure the sustainability of these and future innovations. The guiding questions in this paper include the following: How can one integrate innovations as an impetus for renewed reflections on the philosophical basis for higher education in contemporary Africa into the existing functioning systems? Given the ever-present question of financial resources, can a country with a structurally adjusted economy autonomously fund its social programs, including education with its needs for change? How can African countries secure sufficient resources and support the process of rooting and sustaining their innovations without engaging the universities in the process of “marketization” at the expense of building and harnessing a credible academic community that will play a leading role in the production of critical knowledge? How can the universities promote a relevant African knowledge system while learning from other experiences and sustain the university as a public good?

This paper is basically a reflective essay, although some of the findings and arguments related to recent empirical studies are used to substantiate and clarify some points. It addresses the nature and types of the innovative impulse in higher education. Conceptual issues concerning the definition, and characteristics of innovations and the conditions for their success are discussed. The African experiences of higher education innovations are presented with a discussion of some general issues as well as past and ongoing concrete experiences. Finally, the question of sustainability of the innovations in Africa is addressed with an emphasis on philosophical issues, political will, and the nature of the needed financial and human resources.

The first section deals with the conceptualization of innovation as a necessary and permanent corrective tool assuming both the prevention and redressing of unproductive and downright undesirable situations. The second section recalls some of the African experiences with innovations, focusing on recent cases. The third section examines the conditions for rooting and sustaining home-grown innovations. The conclusion summarizes the main arguments and calls for further research with concrete applications.

Innovation as a Permanent Corrective Tool

The factors that have an impact on the conception, design, implementation, and likelihood of success and diffusion of innovations in general include the role of the individuals, groups, and the institutional units that introduce innovations and the official and actual beneficiaries; the method used to introduce the innovation; the actual presence and weight of external agencies; and the vision of the central political, administrative, and educational authorities or individuals and groups within the institution. The process of innovation is influenced by whether it is internally or externally driven and whether its approach values the beneficiaries and local perspectives instead of a top-down managerial approach. The substance and conditions for the involvement of the beneficiaries, as a basis for the sense of ownership and empowerment to make subsequent decisions, constitute key elements.

An important underlying assumption of innovation within a system (such as education) or subsystem (such as higher education) is that the system or subsystem needs to be fixed on specific areas. Therefore, in addressing the question of sustainability of innovations in African higher education, it is necessary to deal with issues of the nature of the educational system and more specifically, higher education, even if the area targeted is specific.

The notion of improvement per se is subjective and controversial and can be influenced by the perspectives and interests of different interest groups or segments of the same stakeholder groups. In the case of African higher education, the perspectives and appreciation of an innovation's quality and degree of acceptability and its consequences may vary significantly from the students to teaching staff, the administration, the government, and some to the external agencies such as the World Bank. Indeed, the assumption that innovation leads to improvement includes an implicit value judgment that the new practice, service, or structure is in essence beneficial. Yet the different constituencies may have different and conflicting interests even in cases where they all agree that the existing situation requires change. This was in fact the case in the 1980s and 1990s when, for instance, no African education stakeholders could disagree with descriptive studies by the World Bank on some of the manifestations of the African education crisis; and yet teaching staff and students, for instance, in most countries strongly disagreed and generally opposed solutions prescribed in the aftermath of these studies. Thus, innovation is linked to ideology and to particular sets of interests within local and global society. It is in essence a social product.

International institutions that deal with education and provide loans to African states, and more and more to NGOs, to fund their national programs, and industrial countries, within bilateral or multilateral frameworks, have been playing increased and more formalized roles in the African education policymaking process. In this context, how do the relevant constituencies relate to, or become involved in, the different stages of the innovations? The extent to which constituencies and the targeted beneficiaries identify with and appropriate an innovation are significant factors in determining whether it encounters any resistance.

It is an historical fact that African higher education is characterized by a systemic dependency and neocolonial framework in which external decision makers may represent

agencies and interests that do not necessarily take into account Africans' perspectives and interests. Thus, francophone countries, for instance, have introduced in the past many "innovations" that were in fact the mere transfer of innovations from the French system. In the post-colonial context, other models, especially the North American with the United States playing the leading role, are being reproduced in African countries. Thus, innovations from these various industrial countries are often transferred as well. Under these circumstances, such innovations may be more concerned with sustaining the model. How then do people, societies, and states articulate the need and justification for sustainability of a relevant institution? Even though African higher-education institutions have been mirrored after those of the former colonial powers, the African societal realities, needs, constraints, and assets demand innovations that respond to local needs. The neocolonial framework is different from a case of adoption of a new practice that exists in another context in which the institution that adopts it makes the choice based on a search for improvement.

To appropriately address the question of how to ensure sustainable and perennial home-grown innovations in African higher education, it is necessary to systematically deal with two broader issues:

1. the location of African higher education institutions within the global socio-historical and contemporary domestic and international contexts; and
2. the structure of the educational system and the nature of the linkages among the various levels of the system and among the different types of post-primary institutions, especially at the higher-education level.

Formal education in contemporary Africa, as received from the Western colonial experiences and reinforced by African states and societies, has been conceived in a highly structured, vertical, and unidirectional format. Philosophically, within the three major levels of education - primary/elementary, secondary, and higher education - there is a considerable degree of compartmentalization as they are conceived in sequence and in one direction, from the lower to the upper levels. They are dealt with in succession, and separately rather than holistically. Similarly, the various types of education at the post-primary levels are addressed in mutually exclusive terms.

The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the World Bank and IMF targeted the African universities as the sources of the African socioeconomic problems that emerged in the 1980s, as their prescribed "solutions" to African policymakers gave precedence to the funding of basic education over higher education, especially the universities (Assié-Lumumba & Lumumba-Kasongo 1996; UNESCO & the World Bank, Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000; Chachage 2001). There are various types of higher education. They can be analyzed on the basis of the status as public or private institutions which, as argued by Useem (1999) and Mapesela (2002), for instance, have been promoted in the context of globalization and the marketization of education financing and management (Carnoy 1998). Higher education institutions can also be analyzed based on their position as mixed status,

as secular, or faith-based institutions, as well as whether they are brick-and-mortar institutions with face-to-face delivery, open/virtual universities, or a mixture of both.

The point being made is that a complex set of factors must be taken into consideration when conceptualizing sustainability of innovation with concrete implications for African higher-education institutions. Having made these basic clarifications, it is now appropriate to review in the next section some recent innovations as concrete cases to guide a practical proposal for sustainability.

Selected Recent Innovations in African Higher Education

Within their policy and approach of “one size fits all,” many international organizations, especially the World Bank and their specialists, experts, and consultants, have prescribed the same packaged solutions with neither care nor interest for creativity. Yet despite their common problems or similar manifestations of these problems, there is a considerable degree of regional, national, and institutional specificities that must be reckoned with.

For the purpose of this paper, the concrete cases for illustrations of innovations in African higher education are drawn from studies commissioned by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) working group on higher education (WGHE) that were funded in 2001 by the Foundation Partnership for African Higher Education composed of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the MacArthur Foundation. The study was conceived to identify significant innovations at three specific levels and eight areas considered critical to the transformation of higher education in Africa. The three levels are systems, institutions, and faculties. The eight areas are: (1) strategic institutional vision, mission, role, and focus; (2) financing; (3) governance; (4) curriculum/quality; (5) staff development; (6) equity; (7) relevance; and (8) student life and any other innovations that, generally or in national and institutional contexts, contribute to new ways of providing an enabling environment for the mission and attainment of the educational and societal goals of universities and higher education institutions in general and in areas considered critical to the transformation of higher education in Africa. It was carried out by a team of four higher-education experts in four sub-regions: Anglophone West Africa (represented by Ghana and Nigeria), East Africa, Francophone Africa, and Southern Africa. The number of innovations reported also varies. The countries included in the study are:

- 1) Anglophone West Africa represented by Ghana (Nigeria was included in the initial project);
- 2) The Francophone region: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Niger, Senegal, and Université Catholique d’Afrique Centrale (a regional university based in Cameroon);
- 3) The Eastern Africa region: Rwanda, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Sudan, Tanzania, Mauritius, and Kenya; and

4) The Southern Africa region: South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

- From the synthesis (Ng'ethe 2003) of the four reports and also from the specific study of this author (Assié-Lumumba 2003), some of the findings are listed below to serve as a basis for the discussion on sustainability. It is important to note first that due to increasing demand for university education, countries and institutions have been forced to devise innovative ways to respond to these needs.

- Universities are engaged in developing new vision and mission statements and strategic planning, which generally emanate from frameworks and technical guidance provided by the World Bank. An indicator of university visions and missions, with the notion of comparative advantage, is the creation of specialized institutions.

- Governance innovations have been guided by notions of “good governance” in vogue in the 1990s, although they are not radical innovations.

- Curriculum review has increased, although formidable obstacles must be overcome before this becomes the norm. However, most of the mechanisms for review fall short of being innovative.

- New bases of the organization of the academic year, for instance, the semester system, are being increasingly adopted. Similarly the use of credit systems as a basis for deciding the passing grade of the students is on the rise. Strictly speaking these are not innovations as they already exist in other educational institutions, especially in the United States.

- The concept of lifelong learning is increasing in influence. Although the educational systems in which it is applied are the inherited European ones, it is important to note that the notion of lifelong learning is imbedded in the African tradition.

- The use of ICTs is expanding on single- or dual-mode basis ? entirely as distance learning or a combination of distance learning and face-to-face delivery ? with innovations emerging in distance learning, on-line registration, university management, improvement of quality through on-line access to teaching materials, and the like.

- Distance/open universities and also traditional brick-and-mortar institutions have been involved in mergers at departmental, institutional, national, and international, levels; the World Bank has been playing a leading role in this area in setting up the African Virtual University (AVU) that includes several countries.

- Vocational, professional, skills development, and work-based programs have increased, with or without a distance learning component, along with staff development and retention through improved living and working conditions for more efficient teaching, evaluations, and academic production and publication necessary for promotion.

- There are innovative approaches in pedagogy and assessment, including student-led and interactive seminars and assessment teams that include potential employers. To address the issue of relevance, partnerships between higher education and other sectors, including potential employers such as government, business, and the community at large have been increasing through various mechanisms including: university support to the staff;

input from industries in revising old curricula and designing new ones; the representation of industry on the boards of university governance; faculty consultancy and collaborative work in dealing with issues such as intellectual property rights; and community involvement in creating university mission statements. On the whole, universities are forging innovative ways to dispel the old image of the ivory tower.

- Finally, it is important to note that the overwhelming majority of African universities have been functioning under tremendous financial constraints since the economic crisis that started in the 1980s. Thus, many innovations are geared toward finding ways and means to meet their institutional needs.

In searching for adequate and sustainable funding, the universities have been advised to conceive new “partnerships” with institutions that have vested interests, the government, the private sector, non-profit organizations, families, students, and the community at large, so that all can share the costs. Several key areas and diversified sources were recommended in an attempt to control the funding and financial viability of the universities. In this context, there has been an increasingly common trend towards the emergence of a “market” or “entrepreneurial” orientation that has led to the “marketization” of higher education (Subotzky 2000, p. 7, cited by Bailey 2002). Resulting from processes of globalization, the marketization of higher education “is characterised by closer partnerships with outside ‘clients’ and other knowledge producers, by a greater onus on faculty to access external sources of funding and by a managerialist ethos in institutional governance, leadership and planning” (Ibid.). Hence, the innovations that have been conceived in response to financial pressures are likely to be in conflict with those that are based on educational needs and not governed by the economic profit maximization assumptions and motives.

Privatization of educational finance, within the broader neo-liberal agenda of across-the-board privatization of social institutions, has been almost an obsession in policies prescribed by the World Bank. Indeed, besides the creation of institutions, one of the main aspects of the privatization of higher education has been the privatization of funding.

In “New Dimensions in Educational Financing: The Nigerian Education Bank,” Chuta (1998) praises the Nigerian Education Bank, especially in the areas of student lending but also in lending for publishing, equipment leasing, project financing, funds mobilization, and advisory services for education matters. Some prescriptions are incorporated to fine tune the operational modalities. Chuta recommends increased participation of the Nigerian private sector in financing education and the strengthening of the student-lending scheme through resources from petroleum, a higher-education tax, and a value-added tax.

In *Financing Higher Education in Africa: Makerere, the Quiet Revolution*, David Court (2000) presents what sounds like the epic story of Makerere University in Uganda that has successfully resolved the common African problem of lack of quality education at the tertiary level without dependence on the state for funding. The overall success reported concerns the restructuring of three main and interconnected elements: (1) implementing alternative financing strategies; (2) installing new management structures; and (3) introducing demand-

driven courses. Makerere is praised for having successfully moved from an institution where students paid no fees to one at which more than 70 percent do, within just five years, thus leading to decreased public contribution, with the implication that the government can have the ability to focus on funding primary education. Court raised the outstanding issue of the regulatory framework that defines Makerere's relationship with the other universities in Uganda, specifically the private universities that are increasing in number. He also draws attention to the question of sustainability. This issue of sustainability is addressed in the following section.

Conditions for Rooting and Sustaining Home-Grown Innovations

African universities made great strides in the 1960s and 1970s in meeting high social demand and states' projected needs in high-level human resources. As long as there are no viable alternatives for desirable socioeconomic attainment, demand will remain strong. To claim to be legitimate modern states, African countries need to have the institutional base of strong higher education for teaching, research, and dissemination of research results that will produce relevant knowledge for social progress. How can innovations contribute toward meeting that challenge and take root in African higher-education institutions and societies as a permanent corrective tool for autonomous and enduring social progress?

In his book, *Solving Educational Problems: The Theory and Reality of Innovation in Developing Countries*, Havelock (1977, pp.122-123) points out the central role played by "external advisers" whose role is defined by "their access to additional sources of expertise and finance." Because of the nature of the relationship between "bilateral and multilateral agencies" and developing countries, innovations proposed and supported in these frameworks tend to be "carried on by senior political and ministry officials with the aid of a central planning unit."

Such innovations bear the stamp of external imposition that tends to ignore local perspectives and they are likely to encounter resistance, even if only passive, precisely for that reason. Attempting to promote change decided by "experts" and/or central administrations with a top-down approach - ignoring the input of the beneficiaries - tends to lead to resistance on the ground, limited success, or even dismal failure. In order to promote change that can take root through a process of ownership, consensus building is vital.

The fact that Africa is caught up in the gears of international debt has had an impact on the nature of innovations and their chances for taking roots. Financial power and decision-making power are positively correlated. In "The Cuban Education System: Lessons and Dilemmas," Lavinia Gasperini (1999) underscores the apparent Cuban paradox when she recalls that Cuba has achieved:

universal school enrollment and attendance; nearly universal adult literacy; proportional female representation at all levels, including higher education; a strong scientific training base, particularly in chemistry and medicine; consistent pedagogical quality across

widely dispersed classrooms; equality of basic educational opportunity, even in impoverished areas, both rural and urban. In a recent regional study of Latin America and the Caribbean, Cuba ranked first in language and math achievement. In many ways, Cuba's schools are the equals of schools in OECD countries, despite the fact that Cuba's economy is that of a developing country.

This extraordinarily consistent and high Cuban performance, by any standards, has been achieved "even under severe resource constraints". At the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on "Sharing of Experiences and Practices in Social Development" that was held in Havana (Cuba) on June 12-14, 2002, Ramon Pichs Madruga of the Centre for World Economy Studies (CIEM) in Havana explained during his presentation on "The Social Dimension of Sustainable Development: Notes on the Cuban Experience" some of the main factors of the Cuban success:

1. An integrative approach to social development is conceived as a multidimensional process in which economic, social, and environmental sustainability interact and reinforce the attainment of the collective development goal. This goal must be set with a long-term perspective and must consistently aim for intragenerational and intergenerational equity.

2. The fundamental role of the state in social policies is indispensable. In formulating and implementing policies, it is necessary to acknowledge and systematically work within the synergies among the basic areas of human development such as education, health services, and food security. On the governance front, he emphasized a stable political environment, responsible government, and social values oriented to equity as key factors for achieving the goal of social development.

3. One of the not-so-secret weapons for success is that Cuba does not owe money to the international institutions and thus has the privilege of setting its priorities and allocating its limited resources accordingly. Hence, national sovereignty and freedom to set national development priorities are determined not simply by economic might but rather by relative national political, economic, and financial independence.

There are various forms of innovations with regards to their origins: a) innovations conceived and fully designed from outside Africa within the neo-colonial framework and imposed, whether in the bilateral or multilateral conditionalities; b) innovations designed in Africa but in line with external frames of reference; c) innovations freely conceived in Africa within the African ethos.

When the final stage of the diffusion of innovations is achieved and they are blended into the existing system, there is a need to imagine new ones. Thus, the ability to systematically conceive new ways to address or anticipate problems or to improve existing systems, constitutes a permanent and dynamic corrective tool. In dealing with innovation in higher education in Africa, particular attention must be paid to learning and teaching, courses and pedagogy, and the ways in which students learn. Instead of merely thinking of how to

make innovations sustainable, one must try to find a learning strategy that adopts innovative ways of learning and that fosters an “innovative mind set” (Nkondo 2003). Instead of teaching students to learn to reproduce received knowledge that is alien to African societies and theories that constitute an abstraction of realities that are different from Africa’s, students in African institutions must be taught to comprehend why knowledge is generated and for whose benefit. To use Mudimbe’s notion of “epistemological vigilance” (1988), African students must learn to interrogate their environment from where they stand and, thus, from their own perspectives. This kind of mind needs to be de-linked from purely theory-driven pedagogy inherited from the colonial context defined by the West, observed from Western eyes and from a Western standpoint. Instead of teaching the African learners about major Western theoreticians or Westernized African scholars first, it is important to teach them critical observation of, and learning from, their own environment. Such pedagogy can help root the learning in this environment (Ibid.) before looking for additional/external theories to broaden the understanding.

It is important for learners to be involved in identifying and defining the nature and scope of real-life problems. Only then can theory and scholarship be applied to the resolution of these problems located in the African context. It is in the process of solving the problems that Africans can draw from other scholars, including those from the West. This is how the “innovative and mental habit” can be created. This way, wherever learners are, they will develop the competence and innovative “reflex,” as they will be able “to identify and define” the problems around them and rally scholarship in the effort to understand and solve them (Nkondo, Ibid.). This pedagogy of linking teaching and developing inquisitive minds and research skills can provide the human-resource base to innovate, to sustain existing innovations, and to create new innovations.

Such pedagogy applies to all disciplines and types of education, academic as well as so-called “vocational” and “technical” education. In most African institutions, vocational tracks are traditionally conceived as areas of simple physical manipulation or acquiring technical skills and are not supposed to be grounded in theory. Education conceived in these terms can quickly decay and is thus not transferable when contexts change. Yet even vocational tracks are inevitably and consciously grounded in theory (Ibid.).

Romanticizing and freezing Africa in history and superficially constructed or invented “traditions” is a misreading of the African people’s past capacity to innovate even for sheer survival in their environment. Romanticizing African knowledge systems is an unproductive approach to how to best meet the challenges of the global context of the twenty-first century. Nonetheless, being critical, when necessary, of a system, traditional African knowledge systems can guide educational philosophy. It is necessary to conceive and promote the generation of knowledge that refutes the assertion that the canon and orthodoxy of knowledge is from the West (Ibid.). Indigenous African holistic educational and health care systems, for instance, can provide the grounds for defining a new educational philosophy that is rooted and synthesized in the African reality. But this should not be conceived in a framework whereby African and Western or other knowledge systems are thought of in mutually exclusive

terms. Rather, they can be creatively channeled toward resolution of African problems, within the philosophy of fusion.

Innovation is a culture. It infuses the entire learning system, pedagogy, epistemology, childrearing practices, interpersonal communication, and conflict resolution. On the whole, the best way to root innovation as a permanent corrective tool is to create an innovative mind in an appropriate and relevant social system. Although innovations apply to specific aspects of a system, their success or failure depend on the nature of, and their linkage to, the system or at least the institution within which these innovations take place. Involvement of the beneficiaries, including integration of their concerns and perspectives, is necessary throughout the process from the conceptualization, practical formulation and design, implementation, and critical assessment the innovations.

Financial resources are important and, for specific activities to be undertaken, resources should be identified to avoid having great ideas on paper that will only inflate the existing piles of unimplemented social projects. Financial resources, however, should not take precedence over the thorough thinking needed to set a clear vision and specific objectives that will transform peoples' chances to learn for change. Appropriation, of externally conceived innovations, and legitimacy, through people's acceptance of locally designed innovations but conceived to meet external prescriptions, are necessary. In designing the stages of the innovation, the diffusion and long-term stages require as much attention as the immediate and short-run expected benefits.

Conclusion

An integrative approach to social development is conceived as a multidimensional process in which economic, social, and environmental sustainability interact and reinforce the attainment of the collective development goal. Formal education, specifically universities, plays a key role in this process.

In the search for ways and means to ensure sustainability, innovation in higher education should not be conceived primarily in terms of availability of financial resources. Rather, these resources must be considered practical means to help solve problems identified according to the ethos and philosophy that is adopted in advance.

Sustaining token innovation cannot constitute the basis of social progress. New graduates of the educational systems must bring innovative capacity so that they can be prepared to play their part when earlier innovations no longer meet their needs or when new challenges and quests for renewal emerge. The entire higher-educational system and the entire "life system" must be based on a holistic approach. Thus, the end of the compartmentalization of the educational system is necessary. Further, innovation in higher education must occur in partnership with other education levels and institutions. All innovations must be home-grown in the sense that whether they were initially conceived at home or externally, they require appropriation and domestication by the target-population to fit its needs.

According to Nkondo (Ibid.) the issue of the nature and importance of resources in sustaining innovations is problematic in the sense that the assumption that there are no resources is a contradiction. There are not and will not be sufficient resources from anywhere in the world. Although many parts of the wealthy societies and nations of the world owe a debt to Africa, given the objective condition of the structure of the world, there are no real resources coming from anywhere to cover the full needs of African societies and their educational institutions (Ibid.). That is not to say that African countries do not, or should not, receive external resources. As a matter of fact, African countries have been relying heavily on external sources. The power to formulate and implement national policies is dependent on the power to make economic and budgetary decisions. By virtue of their control of the financial resources, external forces decide priority areas which they consider worth allocating resources to. Thus, as virtual surrogates of African states, these external bodies actually set national priorities.

Even in areas where there are public commitments for major policy changes, in reality, there is not a realistic basis for expecting, in the context of the highly stratified and primarily self-serving global system, to have or to obtain the needed resources in full measure. In the context of Africa's location and its role in the global economy, being innovative is a necessary survival and developmental tool that must be permanently sharpened. Innovations with better chances for sustainability are the ones that strive to create bridges and empower complementary and mutually reinforcing contributions to meeting local needs within the global system. A strong state (a social state) with vision is still necessary to offer the national context to support innovations as a permanent corrective tool.

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