

## Contradictions of Academic Development: Exploiting the Professoriate and Weakening the University

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Efforts to save money on higher education, especially in developing countries, are resulting in severe damage to the most central element of teaching and learning—the professoriate. The pressures of mass higher education combined with an unwillingness or inability of the state to support academe adequately, the rise of the private sector and the privatization of public universities, and an increasing differentiation of the academic system all contribute to confusion about the roles and functions of universities in a new environment. Developing countries, particularly, are caught in the contradiction. Faced with demands to enroll ever-greater numbers of students, and at the same time wanting to create high-quality universities, the pressures for mass access always trump quality. This discussion focuses on the small number of “flagship” research-oriented universities, almost always public institutions, that exist in developing countries, and the challenges they face to build quality in a difficult environment. These universities, although small in number, are essential to the future of higher education as well as to long-term success of many developing economies.

The professoriate is the most important resource for building quality, and it is being squeezed from all directions. Faculty members are asked to be more productive, which usually requires a greater teaching load. Administration is being “rationalized,” usually weakening the autonomy of the academic profession and its role in governance. Remuneration, usually inadequate, seldom keeps up with inflation, leading to the need for faculty members to supplement their incomes by additional employment. Given these circumstances, it is impossible to improve the basic work of the university—teaching and learning. No amount of administrative efficiency or private initiative can substitute for the full commitment of a talented faculty.

### AN AFRICAN EXAMPLE

Makerere University, Uganda's flagship academic institution and formerly one of the best in sub-Saharan Africa, has undertaken major reforms that seem, on the surface, rational and appropriate but that in fact are undermining the academic profession at the institution and destroying its research role. In a nutshell, the university has been forced to generate more of its income due to government budget cutbacks. At the same time,

the university has come under pressure to enroll more students so as to provide opportunities for study to larger numbers. Private higher education has also undergone dramatic growth in Uganda—as in many countries—and the new private institutions have struggled to find people to teach.

Makerere responded to this situation rationally, and some would say effectively. Faculty members have been encouraged to do consulting and generate funds for themselves and the institution. Some professors have been successful in working for international organizations, and a few have built relationships with the private sector. Other faculty members teach part time in the new private institutions in order to earn additional income. These new schools are often set up near the main campus to facilitate “commuting.” In Uganda, as in most countries, the new private sector depends heavily on professors at the established public universities. In this way, the public sector is subsidizing the private sector by providing institutions with teachers they could not otherwise afford to hire.

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Makerere has also set up a new teaching program as a way of generating income and supplementing the inadequate state funding. Students who did not qualify for “regular” admission or simply could not be accommodated because of limited enrollment capacity have been offered admission to a new academic track. This new track, which operates mainly in the evening, charges a relatively high tuition fee, and the university keeps the income. Classes are taught by regular Makerere faculty who receive extra payments. It is a kind of “on-campus moonlighting.” The university now has two degree tracks: one inexpensive and state supported, admitting the “cream of the crop”; and the other income generating and admitting students who either could not otherwise be accommodated or admitted. This program has been highly successful, generating considerable income and permitting the university to supplement the incomes of those teaching, and adding greatly needed funds to the institutional coffers.

### IMPLICATIONS

What does all of this mean? On the positive side, participating academics are able to earn enough income to live. Additional students are given access to study, either in the new private institutions or in the “dual track” at Makerere. Consulting has brought in additional income and has in some cases linked the university to emerging enterprises in society. Makerere earns additional funds that can be used to purchase equipment, maintain facilities, and support other important aspects not covered in the state budget. Many in Uganda and elsewhere have hailed the university's income-generating strategies as a great success.

The costs, however, are substantial. Academic staff no longer have time to conduct research—being simply too busy with their other responsibilities. The culture of the institution will inevitably shift from teaching and research to entrepreneurial zeal—both on the part of individual academics and by the university itself. Generating income will count more than research, teaching, and scholarship. Those who are adept at entrepreneurship will be rewarded. The traditional markers of academic accomplishment—publication in quality journals, focusing on research topics related to a professor’s own scientific interests, competing for grants relevant to these interests—become much less relevant. Faculty increasingly have neither the time nor the motivation to publish articles or engage in sustained research.

Fiscal necessity and accommodation to the market will inevitably change the nature of Makerere University. It will no longer be a university in the traditional sense of the term but will instead be a market-driven income-maximizing institution providing credentials to larger numbers of students. Professors will no longer fulfill their traditional roles. Makerere has traditionally been seen as the flagship university for Uganda, aspiring to relate to the best universities in the world. Many Makerere academics participate in the international scientific community, attending scientific conferences and working with colleagues elsewhere. In the new market-driven environment, such participation will become increasingly rare as local academics focus on income-generating activities.

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The challenges discussed here are common in Africa and throughout the developing world. Makerere is a particularly good example of this trend precisely because it has been so successful in building alternative sources of income and support. If academic institutions in developing countries aspire to participate in the international scientific community and provide their students with high academic quality, the new entrepreneurial spirit will make this very difficult. Budget cutting and marketization have consequences—among them a profound change in the role of the academic profession. ■

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## Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders: A Statement on Behalf of Higher Education Institutions Worldwide

*This document—prepared by the International Association of Universities (IAU), the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)—was circulated as a draft to higher education membership associations worldwide for comment from May to September 2004. This final version has benefited from their commentary.*

Higher education’s tradition of exchanging ideas and people across borders has long served to advance its contribution to society’s cultural, social, and economic goals. In recent years, there has been an impressive expansion of cross-border higher education initiatives. This expansion is characterized by two main trends. One is the growing imperative of higher education institutions to internationalize—to integrate an international/intercultural dimension into teaching, research, and community service—in order to enhance their academic excellence and the relevance of their contribution to societies. Higher education institutions have long experience in this area and are rapidly expanding their cooperation with their counterparts around the world.

The second trend is the growth of market-driven activities, fueled by increased demand for higher education worldwide, declining public funding in many national contexts, the diversification of higher education providers, and new methods of delivery. The growth of this second trend, in particular, and the complex issues it raises provide the impetus for this document.

The scope, complexity, and volume of cross-border activity<sup>1</sup> create new challenges and intensify existing ones. Principal among these are the need to (a) safeguard the broader cultural, social, and economic contributions of higher education and research, particularly given the critical role they play in today’s global knowledge society; (b) protect the interests of students and facilitate their mobility; (c) strengthen the capacity of developing countries to improve accessibility to quality higher education, especially at a time when the gap in resources and access to knowledge between the industrialized and developing world is growing; and (d) preserve linguistic and cultural diversity within higher education.

This document is based on the belief that market forces alone are inadequate to ensure that cross-border education contributes to the public good. Therefore, it lays the groundwork for fair and transparent policy frameworks for managing