

finance and accounting, human resources, procurement, and information technology. The MoHE is focusing on building parallel capacity in the ministry and each of the major public universities in order to pilot increased administrative autonomy across the essential administrative functions.

Financial autonomy is closely linked to some areas of administrative autonomy, but the current focus is on changing the higher education finance law in Afghanistan that mandates free tuition and prohibits the retention of any funds earned by a university. This legal arrangement does little to incentivize institutions to develop innovative programs; rather such efforts are typically perceived as a superfluous drain on faculty and institutional resources. The inability to generate and manage funds has been particularly problematic given the lack of resources of the Afghan government to adequately fund higher education. In fact, 80 percent of the national budget comes from the international donor community, a very limited and tenuous resource base at best. Four institutions are piloting limited financial autonomy and there has been a push to change the law, but the process is highly complex, involving reviews by multiple government agencies and committees.

Conversely, private higher education institutions have been extremely autonomous as they are almost wholly unregulated. However, MoHE began to address this issue with the first ever review of private institutions in 2013-2014 in which almost all of the private institutions were found to be of dubious quality. Unfortunately, MoHE lacks the political and financial resources to enforce any types of standards in the largely unregulated and historically underdeveloped private sector.

The formal higher education system is just beginning to define the roles and responsibilities of four types of organizational units—MoHE, the Commission on Quality Assurance, public universities, and private institutions. First, the MoHE is firmly entrenched as a central administrative unit comprised of various subunits (divisions, directorates, and departments) that provides highly centralized governance and coordination of all higher education activity in the country. Second, semiautonomous national coordinating committees and commissions, such as the national Commission on Quality Assurance, are just beginning to emerge; and the development of these bodies will be essential for coordinating and aligning policies, procedures, and practice throughout a more autonomous higher education system. Third, public institutions remain semiautonomous academic units (each of whom have subunits in the form of faculties and departments) that are responsible for the direct delivery of higher education throughout the country, but still have limited autonomy to make strategic and operational decisions related to academic, administrative, and

financial functions. Fourth, private institutions are highly autonomous and MoHE is considering ways to bring them in under the emerging quality assurance system.

#### CONCLUSION

Higher education, like most aspects of Afghan life, has made significant progress in the last decade. Policy frameworks and procedures are being implemented to increase institutional autonomy in the public sector; however, it will take several more years before individual leaders and academic staff have the capacity to take full advantage of the opportunities for increased autonomy. At the same time, Afghanistan will struggle to manage the lack of control within the private sector. It is clear that the discrepancy in quality, cost, and autonomy between the public and private sectors of higher education presents another layer of complexity that must be addressed in the near future as the private sector continues to grow in size and potential importance. The higher education system has been firmly reestablished, and these changes will slowly contribute to improving the quality and relevance of an accessible and sustainable higher education system that can more capably contribute to the myriad of challenges to loom as Afghanistan increasingly charts its own course as a sovereign state. ■

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## Institutionalization of Community Engagement at African Universities

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Although the earliest universities in Europe began as teaching-only institutions, many have expanded to embrace teaching, research, and community outreach and engagement. African universities are also expected to teach, conduct research, and serve society. At the 1962 UNESCO conference on the “Development of Higher Education in Africa,” African higher education institutions were urged to be in constant touch with society and to adapt their teaching and research activities toward African problems. In fact, a number of African universities—such as, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Makerere University, University of Botswana, University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Mauritius, University of Ghana, and University

of Dar es Salaam—include community engagement among their functions and priority areas. In addition, most of the universities have organizational structures—such as, consultancy bureaus, continuing education centers, business incubation centers, and technology development and transfer centers—and personnel to promote community engagement and/or coordinate community related activities.

Community engagement remains marginally institutionalized at most African universities: most universities have not yet fully integrated community engagement into their budgets, teaching and learning, and research activities. Their faculty hiring and promotion practices either ignore or insufficiently recognize faculty contributions to the external communities. The report of the management board committee—set up by the University of Nairobi to review the university's policy on training and promotion, for example—ignores the contributions of the faculty to community engagement but instead emphasizes publications, supervision of students, and teaching experience among others, as the criteria for faculty promotions to senior academic positions. Even universities, such as Makerere Uni-

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versity in Uganda, with community engagement among the criteria for faculty hiring and promotions to senior academic positions, allocate few points to faculty engagement, and service to external communities. In addition, funding for community engagement is largely sporadic, insufficient, or reliant on foreign funding sources. Therefore, most community related projects are initiated by individuals or groups of faculty members and are thus less institutional, but more personal in nature. Hence, the question is: What can African universities do to institutionalize community engagement?

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

Community-related projects at most universities often rely on the involvement, commitment, and expertise of the faculty, staff, and students. Thus, such projects usually die

out or become unsustainable when individuals leave or are no longer involved. The institutionalization of community engagement at African universities necessitates the creation of university-wide agendas and institutions—policies, structures, and practices—to guide and facilitate the involvement of the academic units, faculty, staff, students, and external communities in community engagement. It also calls for the integration of community engagement into institutional budgets, teaching, and research activities—through service learning, collaborative research, and internships—and the deliberate involvement of the external communities in curriculum development among other activities. The institutionalization of community engagement also necessitates the vision and commitment of university leaders, whose support can help to address the concerns of the uninterested and/or suspicious faculty, staff, students, and external communities. Thus, the decision by Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University to create the office of the deputy vice-chancellor in charge of research and engagement is commendable. However, community engagement should not be left to individual leaders, lest such dependence curtail the sustainability of community related activities, when such leaders are no longer in charge.

The creation of specialized organizational units, the integration of community engagement into university budgets and activities, and the presence of supportive leadership at all levels alone cannot guarantee the full institutionalization of community engagement, unless the involvement of the faculty is properly rewarded. The institutionalization of community engagement at any university is evinced by and benefits from the involvement and commitment of the faculty, staff, students, and external communities. Indeed, many community related activities—continuing education, consultancy, contract research, service learning, and collaborative research—rely on the connections, involvement, knowledge, and commitment of the faculty. Therefore, unless African universities integrate the contributions of the faculty to community engagement into their faculty hiring, evaluations, and promotions processes and reward them appropriately, faculty members will continue to regard community engagement not as an essential duty, but as a distraction to career development.

#### **OBSERVATIONS**

Although community engagement offers undeniable benefits to universities and external communities—for example, accessibility to external sources of funding, the enrichment of students' learning experiences, and accessibility to academic expertise and other resources of universities—institutionalizing community engagement at African universities requires a deeper understanding of the phrase "community engagement." Community engagement is often interpreted

in terms of collaborations between universities and industry, the transfer of technology from universities, and creation of spin-off firms. Yet, the term also embraces ways through which external communities, such as government and local communities, engage with and contribute to the welfare of universities and the involvement of universities in policymaking and social and cultural life. Accordingly, any approach to the institutionalization of community engagement that focuses only on the commercialization of technology is likely to limit the ways through which African universities can engage with, and/or serve, external communities because African universities are not yet key players in cutting-edge innovation. In addition, although African universities should support and encourage the production of socially and economically relevant knowledge as well as the commercialization of inventions, their research agenda should emphasize not only application-oriented research, but also basic research because a number of science systems on the continent—Namibia, Botswana, Swaziland, Mali, Angola and Mozambique—rely on universities for the production of scientific knowledge and, therefore, have no viable alternative producers of knowledge.

Furthermore, much as the institutionalization of community engagement requires that the universities should, among other things, create specialized units—for example, the Food Technology and Business Incubation Center at Makerere University, the Center for Academic Engagement and Collaboration at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, the Center for Continuing Education at the University of Botswana, and the Management and Consultancy Bureau at Dar es Salaam University. To promote community engagement and coordinate engagement-related activities, African universities should avoid creating silo systems that restrict community engagement to specific units, disciplines, and individuals. Similarly, the institutionalization of community engagement at African universities requires each university to pay attention to its institutional context—for example, history, disciplinary focus, location, ownership, mission, culture, values and priorities, and national policy agendas. Because universities, even those in the same country, cannot have the same institutional environments, the focus, forms, and organization of community engagement cannot be the same for all universities. In this regard and considering the insufficiency of funding that characterizes many African universities, the funding allocation system for community engagement at each university should reflect, conform to, and support the vision, mission, objectives, and community engagement agenda of the specific university. ■

## Australian Universities Under Neoliberal Management: The Deepening Crisis

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Australian higher education dates from the second half of the 19th century, when a few small universities were set up in raw and violent settler colonies. The rationale was that universities transmitted stabilizing cultural traditions—such as the ability to quote Horace in Latin—and gave young lawyers, engineers, and doctors some technical skills with a portion of European humane education on top. Indigenous knowledge, like indigenous students, were utterly excluded.

In the mid-20th century, the universities were transformed under an agenda of national development. The country was industrializing. To be fully modern, Australia needed a bigger secondary and tertiary education system and wider recruitment of students. After World War II the Australian federal government, previously little interested in universities, put growing amounts of taxation revenue into expanding the small colonial-era universities, and building many more in the “greenfields” around Australian cities. A massive growth in student numbers followed.

A change in the character of universities accompanied this growth. The idea spread that the society needed technology, cutting-edge science, even social science. The research university is the great modern producer of knowledge. So, Australia needed expanding research capacity. A national research university was launched in the late 1940s, and the other universities soon began expanding higher degrees. As well as new lecture theaters, the plate glass windows of research institutes were seen in the land.

Four decades of expansion produced a public university workforce, which by the 1970s and 1980s was an important presence in Australian society. It was the main base for the country’s intellectual life, and probably did help economic growth. The university system created in this time was a remarkable social resource—not large compared with the United States or Europe, but of good quality, all public, and enjoying wide popular support.

### THE NEOLIBERAL TURN

In the 1980s, Australian universities’ conditions of existence changed. The country’s political and business elites turned toward neoliberalism, with its bracing agenda of privatization, deregulation, tax cuts, management power,