



**Prof. Abdu B.K. Kasozi**  
Fellow of Uganda National Academy  
of Sciences

### Transitioning African universities from mainly teaching to both training and knowledge production institutions

To transition African universities from the mainly teaching function that they now focus on to both training and knowledge producing institutions, African States must increase funding of universities, especially their research functions. Good education, particularly higher education, is key to development as it is now clear that States which have moved into middle and upper income levels planned and have got excellent higher education systems. If Africa is to move forward, it must have education systems that can develop the capacity of its people to create relevant knowledge, to disseminate this knowledge, to train thinkers and to apply

acquired knowledge in society. In short, Africa must focus its attention on having an effective higher education system with the university as the core of such a system. To do so, Africa must adequately finance higher education in order to reposition the university not only as a training institution that it is today but also as a major engine and instrument of development. To achieve this goal, universities will not only need funds but also good governance. Many bureaucrats in Government ministries of finance and education throughout Africa still hold residuals of neoliberal beliefs which look to the market for funding higher education. But the market is only interested in funding profitable areas of teaching and not research. As a result, most of our universities are teaching institutions focusing mainly on the “production of skilled manpower” with little attention to research, knowledge production and innovation. A recent article in the Lancet has showed how backward Africa is in the area of knowledge production (Fonn, August 30, 2018). Although the continent has 13% of global population, its contribution to global research output is a mere 1%. Only one or two of its universities are listed in the best one hundred university institutions in the world. The major cause for Africa’s failure to produce knowledge is lack of State investment in research and development and making the university the core of national innovation systems. Research output in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in Africa has been declining by 0.2% each year since 2002 although there have been some increases in the life and food sciences areas.

One of the major causes of Africa’s failure to contribute to knowledge is its failure to throw away the neoliberal mentality of thinking that the market can effectively fund higher

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education. In a recent review of Education in Uganda, a Ministry official insisted that research funds should be raised from Internally Generated Funds collections by universities. This is difficult because students pay about 40% of unit costs and the middle class in Africa is too weak to contribute to education in ways other than paying fees. Africa contributes less than 1% to global expenditure on research (compared to 3% by Latin America, 27% by Europe, 31% by Asia and 37% by North America). In the case of Africa, Kenya contributes 0.8%, South Africa 0.7% and Uganda 0.04 as a percent of GDP to research and Development.

Many African States still believe in the market as an alternative funder of higher education. Market models regard education as commodities for sale and education institutions as merchants selling education products to customers called students (Psacharopoulos *et al.* 1986; Slaughter and Garry, 2004; Hayes and Robin, (Eds.) 2002; Mamdani, 2007). The collapse of command and the triumph of market economies in the early 1990 strengthened support for market models of running States. The decay of African States in the period 1970-85, many of which were burdened by bankrupt government enterprises and over regulation of markets, gave the international financial institutions opportunity to impose western market models under the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) to African and other countries at the same level of development (Maassen and Cloete, 2002; Oketch, 2003; Sutherland, 2003; Harrison, 2004). Under these Structural Adjustment Programmes, the role of the state was reduced including the delivery of services like education. Higher education suffered most as it was not only deemed to be a private good but also a luxury for Africa. In one meeting of African Vice-Chancellors, a World Bank paper proposed the closure of African universities and suggested overseas education for African students (Banya and Elu 2001). Yet, the demand for higher education was increasing very fast, not only in East Africa but also in most of Africa. Although sub-Saharan Africa's gross enrolment ratio (GER) of 5-10% compares badly with the 70% of high income countries, at 15% annual growth, it is the fastest in growth amongst the continents of this world. Continued demand for higher education made parents and students invest in higher education as government funding continued to decline. It is not surprising that private higher education grew very rapidly in Africa in the last decade, which in turn, reinforced the belief in market models for financing the deluge (Thaver, 2003; Varghese, 2006).

With the collapse of the "completely" free market ideology as a result of the 2008 global financial chaos, one would have hoped that African Governments should have drawn strategic plans in which higher education was recognized as a driver of development and the university as the core of any country's research and innovation system that is critical for

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funding. Higher Education should then have been funded not only for producing skilled human resource, but also as the engine to drive African development. But recent studies show that very few African countries have given higher education a central role in their national development strategies (Cloete, 2015). Besides, higher education is a public good because it is valuable for society as well as for the individual. Higher education has many functions that States should review in their funding behavior. The major functions of higher education are to produce knowledge for development as well as skilled and thinking individuals who must use known wisdom to create better knowledge to improve themselves and their societies. To do so, higher education performs a number of functions including the following seven for societies. First, higher education trains and supplies the market with the skilled labor force needed to drive economies including teachers, doctors, civil servants, engineers, entrepreneurs, scientist, social planners, lawmakers and many other categories of personnel. Secondly, higher education enhances the social upward mobility of individuals and groups and thereby contributes to social harmony. Thirdly, higher education equips society with the thinking capacity it needs to function and compete in the modern world. Fourthly, higher education contributes to the growth of knowledge by providing researchers with facilities for creating, disseminating and storing knowledge in institutions of higher education and other knowledge centres. Fifthly, higher education contributes to democratic governance by equipping its graduates with intellectual skills to understand and analyze political issues before taking appropriate positions. Sixthly, higher education supports knowledge based economic growth through general training of the labor force and advanced training linked to a country's innovation system. And, lastly, higher education strengthens the lower levels of education by training the needed teaching personnel and prompting or triggering relevant curriculum changes at the lower levels. In fact, lower level syllabuses are structured to fit into the admission requirements of higher education.

However, higher education can only perform all those functions if both its training and knowledge producing functions are operative. Research sharpens the minds of both the teachers and the student leading them to ask relevant questions. Research and teaching in a university setting dovetail and the negation of one eliminates the other. Research must therefore be well funded. The private sector in Africa is not in a position to funder the research component of higher education. Only States can.

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**About the Author:**

Prof. Kasozi is a well-established scholar in the field of higher education. He has led several education reform programmes and headed the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) in Uganda. He is a well published researcher on education issues.