THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATION

IN AFRICA

Alexander A. Kwapong

Ota, Nigeria
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Discussions of the Inaugural Programme of the Africa Leadership Forum

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The Challenge
Of Education in Africa
By
Alexander A. Kwapong

Africa today is facing a multifaceted crisis. This crisis warranted the convening, in 1986, of a special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations to devise ways to retard the decline and initiate recovery in the continent. Despite the heroic efforts made by several African governments and the intervention of the United Nations, most African countries remain in the shadow of this deepening crisis. The constituent elements of Africa’s most recent problems have been well analyzed. A severe decline in agriculture and food production; the failure to keep pace with natural population growth and urbanization; an increase in food imports in most countries; and a disastrous fall in export commodity prices, hand in hand with a crushing debt burden which is one of the highest per capita in the developing world. Many African governments have been forced to postpone, if not forego, many development activities, not least education and other social and cultural development programmes, with a consequent continuing vicious spiral of growing political, economic and social instability.

At the 1986 special session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Organization of African Unity proposed the African Priority Programme for Economic Recovery for 1986-1992 (APPER) as its response to the crisis, within was subsequently adopted by the UN. Under this programme, the Africans accepted full responsibility for the development of their continent and made a commitment to undertake the structural adjustment and reforms of their economies while the international community in return offered to provide sufficient support for the African development efforts.

However, as has been emphasized in a recent report by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, it is clear that, despite courageous efforts made by many African governments to effect various reforms, the progress had been insufficient, while the response of the international community has been far from adequate. At least 28 African countries have introduced tough far-reaching economic policy reforms essential to aiding the recovery and development process and, as a result of these reforms and more favorable weather conditions, both food production and manufacturing output have seen modest increases. Nevertheless, this increased production has been largely counteracted by the international economic trends, which have dealt a very severe blow to the African economic recovery. The most important exogenous factors are in fact the disastrous fall in commodity prices, on which most African economies are dependent, and the mounting external debt burden of most African countries. Commodity prices fell to their lowest levels in more than 30 years last year and Africa’s export income declined from US$64 billion in 1985 to US$45 billion in 1986, suffering thereby a total deterioration in trade terms of 32 per cent.

Africa’s total external debt is estimated by the UN Economic commission for Africa to have risen to US$218 billion, equivalent to almost three times the continent’s export earnings by the end of 1987. And, were it not for debt rescheduling, 35.8 per cent of the continent’s
export earnings (47.3 per cent in the case of sub-Saharan Africa) would have gone to debt servicing last year. Low income African countries whose real GDP growth declined in per capita terms are particularly vulnerable to the debt problem and in 17 “debt distressed nations” annual debt servicing requirements in fact are estimated to triple from US$2.3 billion in 1985 to US$6.9 billion during 1988 to 1990 (see Africa Recovery, November 1987, No. 3, P.16).

Africa’s recovery and sustainable development will therefore depend on many important factors, including the expansion – both quantitative and qualitative – of the continent’s stock of human capital through education. As the President of the World Bank, Barber Conable, introduced a recent World Bank policy study on education: “Without education, development will not occur. Only an educated people can command the skills necessary for sustainable economic growth and for a better quality of life.” The key role of education, despite the political difficulties in most African countries and vagaries of development theories and fashions during the past decades, is now accepted as indispensable for any effective development. All African governments were certainly convinced of this key role of education in the early years of their independence, and as Mr. Conable points out, African governments have accordingly placed heavy emphasis on expanding educational opportunities from primary school to university in the two or three decades since their independence.

At the time of their independence, African nations inherited systems of education which were inadequate to meet their needs for self-governance and rapid economic growth. From this disadvantaged starting point, Africa has achieved a remarkable progress in the development of its educational system. The impressive nature of this progress is particularly reflected in the quantitative expansion registered since the 1960s. Between 1960 and 1983, the number of students enrolled in African institutions at all levels quintupled to about 63 million students. Enrolment increased about 9 per cent annually between 1970 and 1980, double the rate in Asia and triple that in Latin America. The substantial expansion of education after independence has increased the participation of some groups who had had little or no access to formal education. The expansion of primary school enrolments in Africa, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, may have been unparalleled at any time or place in history. Despite this impressive record, however, education in Africa has not been able to escape the crisis now afflicting the continent. It is important, therefore, that the challenge of education in Africa be reassessed. What does this challenge entail? The main challenge of education is to develop the human resources that will ensure accelerated development and modernization without compromising Africa’s cultural identity. Education must expand the knowledge base of Africans that will allow us to undertake the socio-economic, cultural, and political transformation necessary to achieve development.

Several reasons can be mentioned to highlight the cardinal role of education in African development. Education satisfies a basic human need for knowledge, provides a means of helping to meet other basic needs, and helps sustain and accelerate overall development. It provides essential skilled manpower for both the formal and informal sectors of the economy, provides the means of developing the knowledge, skills, and productive capacities of the labour force, and acts as a catalyst in encouraging modern attitudes and aspirations. Another important aspect of education in development lies in the fact that education helps to determine not only the income of the present generation but also the future distribution of
income and employment. It must also be mentioned that education influences social welfare through its indirect effects on health, fertility, and life expectancy and helps to increase the profitability of other forms of social and physical investment.

In order for education to realize its key role in development, its major development objectives must be carried out. Firstly, education must be provided to the younger segments of African society as quickly as human and financial resources permit, with the ultimate goal of developing a comprehensive system of education at all levels and for all age groups. Secondly, emphasis must be placed on a more equitable distribution of educational opportunities and on the reduction of existing inequalities based on sex, economic status, and geography. Thirdly, the attainment of greater internal efficiency of the educational system, as a first step towards improved quality of education, should be a priority in order to reduce the misuse of resources caused by students dropping out or repeating grades. Fourthly, a greater external efficiency of the educational system, through an increase in the relevance of schooling to the job market, is also desirable so that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to find employment; and fifthly, Africa should work toward the development and maintenance of an institutional capacity to formulate and carry out educational policy and to plan, analyze, manage, and evaluate education and training programmes and projects at all levels.

Education can no longer be reviewed simply as a means of raising political and social consciousness. It is an integral component of an overall development effort. On the basis of the recognition that the development of a country’s human resources is essential to its prosperity and growth and to effective use of its physical resources, African governments have been willing to extend education to all segments of their societies, particularly the younger generation. This has been accomplished primarily through an effort to improve education opportunities. Many successes have been registered in this respect but there is still room for more to be done. Educational opportunities in Africa could be improved still further by making it easier for all children, particularly in rural areas, to attend school and by equalizing the enrolment ratios between rural and urban children, poor and wealthier children, and between sexes. These efforts are often hampered not only by limitations on financial and human resources but also by geographical and demographic conditions which make it difficult and costly to construct schools, supply learning materials, and provide qualified teachers. Some ways to improve access and equity include improving mechanisms to meet basic education needs, drawing on local resources, and building schools in areas where they are most needed.

Inefficiency is a major obstacle retarding efforts to provide universal education in Africa. It is now recognized that improvements in both external as well as internal efficiency in education enhances this sector’s performance in terms of output quality. The external efficiency of an educational system is judged by the extent to which schools, universities, or training institutions provide the necessary skills for the smooth running of the economy. Or better still the extent to which school-leavers or graduates are absorbed into the labour market, find the jobs and the earnings they expect, and are able to use their skills in employment. The external efficiency of education is also judged by the balance between the costs of investment in education and the economic benefits as measured by the higher productivity of educated workers, that is, by the social rate of return. By taking into account
the external efficiency considerations of the educational system policy-makers and educators will be in a better position to answer the question: What mix of education and training is best suited to meet the highly diverse needs of the society?

There are various possible modes of delivering educational services from which African policy-makers and educators can choose: general education, diversified schools, technical and vocational schools, on-the-job training, and non-formal educational programmes. In any case, what is necessary is to maintain a balance between general and specialized education, between various levels of schooling, and between alternative delivery vehicles or methods of teaching, which may differ in terms of cost and effectiveness.

In relation to internal efficiency, the extent to which an educational system produces qualified graduates should also be improved. This can be accomplished in various ways without necessarily requiring a significant increase in capital. Administrative action relating to the flow of students, class size, and the use of space and facilities is often the best way of achieving internal efficiency.

Repeaters occupy a high proportion of places in African schools. Dropout rates also remain high. These two groups of students consume scarce resources with low returns to themselves and to the society. An effective way of reducing both dropout and grade repetition rates is to improve the quality of education by providing better trained teachers who use pedagogical methods of a higher standard and by providing more and better teaching materials. A lasting solution to high dropout and repetition rates must also take into account wider socio-economic aspects which include not only the quality of education but also the importance attached to the children’s contribution to the family economy, by their health and nutrition, by the level of education attained by their parents, and by the kind of pre-school stimulus given at home.

The key role of education in the development process is the reason why the World Bank has put so much emphasis on supporting educational expansion and improvement in sub-Saharan Africa. Two main issues presently affecting African education are analyzed in the World Bank policy study: the stagnation of enrolments and the decline in standards of quality. Concerning the first, all levels but especially in the primary sector, education enrolment vis-à-vis burgeoning population growth has declined. But more serious is the conclusion that cognitive achievement is low in African students by world standards and that the recent further decline in supplies of the key inputs into the education system at all levels, such as books and other learning material, has had deleterious consequences affecting the quality of performance of students as identified in cross national studies.

The Bank has proposed three policy remedies. First, adjustment to current demographic and fiscal realities through the diversification of the sources of finance, and the containment of the unit costs of education throughout all the three sectors. Second, the revitalization of the existing educational infrastructure, which has deteriorated in several African countries, particularly with a renewed commitment to academic standards, the restoration of an efficient mix of inputs in education and a greater investment in the operation and maintenance of physical plant and equipment and greater expenditure on inputs for these capital assets. And, thirdly, a policy of selective expansion in all three sectors, through renewed progress towards
long-term goals of universal primary education, improvement of the quality of secondary and tertiary sectors through the adoption of distance education programmes, the improvement of training programmes for both school leavers and those who have had no formal schooling and expansion of Africa’s capacities to produce its own intellectual talent to fill the higher scientific and technical jobs through research and post-graduate education.

There are real benefits to be gained from a selective expansion in the three educational sectors. One of the most convincing arguments in favour of expanding primary education rests on the fact that “a literate population is more productive than an illiterate one.” African farmers, for example, would be in a better position to raise their productivity if the majority were literate. Primary education has additional appeal because it is the only formal education that the majority of the African population can hope to receive in the short-run either due to the individuals’ economic situation or their governments’ inability to provide education beyond the primary level. Furthermore, there is no doubt that the quality of primary education plays a cardinal role in determining the quality of all higher levels of education.

**Training and vocational facilities in post-secondary sector.**

An expansion of the secondary sector is also of particular importance because it seeks to augment the general intellectual skills, acquired at the primary level, which are relevant to any productive occupation including subsequent education. It should be noted that, of the three main educational sectors, the secondary sector appears to be the least affected by the economic depression in Africa. This is a reflection of this sector’s strengths. Secondary education has the potential to bridge the gap between primary schooling and advanced, university education.

It is within this latter area, i.e. undergraduate, post-graduate university education, and research that I would now like to concentrate my remarks. One of the basic experience that some of us have had in African countries like Ghana has been the existence of parallel systems of higher education and national research which are not effectively coordinated or integrated into the overall national educational and research programmes. Most serious is the lack of an effective interface between these and especially agriculture, industry, and commerce.

Few would quarrel with the conclusion of the Bank report that preparing and supporting people in positions of responsibility for government, business and professions is the central and essential role of the continent’s universities. While it is agreed that in numbers, African universities have risen impressively to the challenge with enrolment increasing twenty-fold over the past 25 years, from 21,000 in 1960 to 430,000 in 1983, higher education’s contribution to development is now seriously threatened by four inter-related weaknesses. The first being an excessive number of graduates of dubious quality and relevance and the fact that such universities are generating too little new knowledge and direct development support; the second being the serious deterioration of the quality of their output, calling into question the fundamental effectiveness of several of these university institutions; thirdly, the needlessly excessive and enormous costs; and, fourthly, the pattern of financing higher education which is socially inequitable and economically inefficient.
I believe that the four policy reforms that the Bank has proposed to improve the quality of universities, increase their efficiency are basically acceptable and follow from the experiences that all of us have had. These reforms hope to change the output mix of these universities by reducing enrolment in certain fields of study and increasing them in others. And finally by reducing the serious burden on public resources through the sharing of costs between the beneficiaries and users on the one hand and the governments on the other. There have been, of course, arguments about the specifics of the actual remedies proposed to create “savings” from lower unit costs and make students share a greater portion of the costs. The conclusion, however, that a revitalization and selective expansion of such universities will make an important contribution to the recovery of the higher educational sectors on the continent is one that most people will not quarrel with.

Although Ghana (if I may illustrate with the example of my own country) at the time of independence was relatively better off in terms of graduates and trained manpower compared with many others, nevertheless we also began with a shortage of graduates and skilled people required to assume the many responsibilities of nation-building – government, business, industry and agriculture- and of development generally. So the initial emphasis of our university institution building efforts was to expand and produce in increasing numbers, graduates of high quality and competence capable of occupying the positions required for national independence in both the public and the private sectors. The initial preoccupation was to establish and expand undergraduate teaching and improve its quality and maintain this through various mechanisms such as the scheme of “special relationship” with London University, external peer reviewing of exams, external assessment of teaching and research staff and of their appointments and promotions and generally to ensure that the quality of the inputs in books and the infrastructure were kept at the desirable level of quality. The three-fold functions of the university were always in our minds: the functions of providing high quality teaching, research and the dissemination or the extension of the knowledge generated by the universities to the community at large. The initial “special relationship” university colleges were naturally all overwhelmingly staffed by expatriates of the former colonial countries. After the attainment of independence by these colleges as full universities, the issue of their “Africanization” – adapting them to their indigenous environment and staffing them with qualified Africans – became the major preoccupation.

The question of their relevance and adaptation to local needs, of academic freedom and the key role of the universities as instruments for nation building thus assumed growing importance as the universities gained maturity. But it became very clear that in order to achieve all these objectives, the foremost priority in our institution building efforts was staff development, the systematic need to train the skilled local human resources – in the necessary numbers and quality. The main task was to produce the teachers, lecturers and professors for these universities by providing their students with the basic undergraduate training and then supplementing this with the necessary post-graduate classification, first abroad, and then at home.

At this stage, in the early years of university development, the issue was not so much lack of public resource as of the capacity to utilize these resources effectively in order to promote, particularly, the undergraduate training programmes and the production of good quality graduates for the civil service, the government machinery, the professions, agriculture and
industry. However, as more universities were set up and these began to grow in maturity, it became essential at the second stage to move quickly to develop local graduate programmes and to promote the research and performance of these institutions. For this purpose it was clear that a strategy of well thought-out and well-coordinated staff development programmes provided the key.

First, there was the need to insist on the necessary academic standards (First Class Honours or Upper Second Class Bachelor’s degree at least) for selection for the graduate scholarship programmes abroad. The second point was to build up networks of institutions overseas with which the local universities could link up; and thirdly, particularly within this framework, to designate certain key subjects and disciplines for emphasis and to arrange intertwining programmes between the African universities and overseas institutions. In the University of Ghana, for example, it was necessary to draw up a coherent strategic plan for staff development which envisaged that emphasis should be given to agriculture, science, mathematics, economics, and sociology, and demographic studies and in medicine to producing the basic science and clinical teachers and researchers to undertake the teaching and research. (Engineering and architecture were similarly being developed in the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi.)

In the area of agriculture, for example, a link was established with the University of Guelph, which covered not only the main area of agriculture but also home science, in which exchanges were undertaken; qualified staff—about six professors and lecturers from Guelph—visited the University of Ghana regularly and spent varying periods from two to three years and taught various courses and helped in organizing research programmes; and carefully selected post-graduate students were sent from Legon to Guelph who received training at the master’s and PhD levels and then subsequently came back to join the staff. There were also similar links between the University of Ghana and the University of Western Ontario in Economics. Exchanges were established with the Institute for Tropical Agriculture in Prague which sent excellent animal scientists and agronomists to manage the agricultural research stations of the University of Ghana. I recall the sound pioneering plant-breeding research of some of these Czech scientists, which laid the foundations of the citrus industry in Ghana today. There were also links with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the US for a project on population dynamics and demographic research; with the University of California in Geology and Community Medicine; and with the Faculty of Law in Oxford. The link with Oxford University provided annual visits of the Oxford faculty to teach and organize the law faculty in Legon as well as the opportunity for post-graduate students to undertake advanced training in Oxford; many of whom returned to teach in Legon. This arrangement was later extended to Temple University in Pennsylvania, U.S.A. Language teaching, especially French, benefited from similar links with the Universities of Paris and Bordeaux, and later with Dakar and Abidjan Universities in West Africa. Several other examples could be mentioned, but the essential point is that staff development programmes were seen as the key to institution building. As the problems of post-independence emerged, it became abundantly clear that only locally identified and highly qualified graduates, researchers and faculty would be able to provide the long-term stability and critical mass needed for teaching and research that would ensure the dynamic growth of the university.
However, in order to provide for such exchanges, it was necessary not only to formulate the strategies for development and to have a coherent programme of work but also to be able to win the support from either foundations or from donor governments and agencies. It was these who provided the necessary financial aid and foreign exchange support that underpinned these links. Substantial grants by CIDA funded the Canadian exchanges; USAID and the US foundations, especially Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie, supported the links and staff training programmes with the US; and the UK ODA, especially through the British Expatriate Supplementation Scheme (BESS) for British faculty and researchers, underwrote the UK links and exchanges. However, in the early years of Ghana’s cocoa boom and healthy sterling balances, the Government of Ghana financed the local costs and a considerable portion, if not the bulk, of the post-graduate training schemes and exchanges from its own resources. By the time of my departure from Legon at the beginning of 1976, over 80 per cent of the staff of Legon were Ghanaians, most of them trained under these programmes.

Fundamental to the success of all these efforts in institution building were the scientific integrity and academic autonomy of the institutions on the one hand and their commitment and relevance to the basic development needs of the country on the other. Entrepreneurial leadership and a capacity for effective negotiations with donors, both bilateral and multilateral, were of course indispensable. In order to grow and progress, the universities had to be able to draw upon good and healthy primary and especially secondary education sectors with good teaching in the sciences and the other basic disciplines. The efficiency and quality of these sectors assured the three universities of Ghana a constant and growing stream of a well-trained intake of students of the right caliber and “mix” into the universities. The initially important issue for the universities was admissions. That is how to ensure that the imbalance in the mix of students produced by the schools between science and non-science students was corrected in favour of the former through special remedial courses even as special attention was paid to the problem of the under-represented women under-graduates. Every effort was made to increase enrolments and to optimize the training and teaching of these students. Admission standards were kept fairly high but open and there was an insistence that the basic principle of equal opportunities for all should go hand in hand with an insistence upon a high quality end product or output. The quality of the institution was also to be judged first and foremost by the quality of the graduates produced by the university and who were able to assume their vital places in the country. Later on, as these universities began to mature, they would be judged by the caliber and relevance of their research and involvement of these institutions in the development of the country.

The essential task of managing and building such institutions was thus the issue of protecting the academic integrity of these institutions and making them relevant to the political, economic, and social aspirations of the new nations.

The World Bank analysis has certainly brought out most of the factors that we contended with in Ghana as elsewhere. But one missing element in the report is the identification of the overall political environment as a critical aspect for the success of the educational efforts being realized in Africa, and the consequent brain drain. When Ghana’s political situation was sufficiently stable and economically viable to ensure that there were the necessary sustained inputs that the Bank has identified into the universities in Ghana, for instance, then
what was needed was to provide the necessary leadership in management and administration so as to make the universities cost effective, efficient and relevant to the post-graduate training and research and the development needs of the country. Political instability and the collapse of the economy however undermined the continuing viability of these universities and made all the difference to, say, Makerere University, before and after Idi Amin, or the universities of Ghana in the late seventies and early eighties. Thus, this challenge of the brain drain must be explicitly addressed. The brain drain is both a symptom and the effect of the macro-economic and political collapse in many African nations. A very apt illustration of the crisis to which the higher educational sectors of our countries have been subjected, can be provided by what has happened to several African medical schools. The Medical School of the University of Ghana is an institution that was built largely through Ghana's own self-reliant efforts. At its peak it had acquired an international reputation for competence and relevance in meeting the health needs of the country second to none elsewhere, thanks to the exceedingly high intellectual intake of students and the competent management of its various teaching and research departments. Nevertheless, in the early and mid-eighties, when the political and economic crisis of Ghana had taken its heavy toll, the haemorrhage of the medical faculty flooding from Ghana into other regions not only of Africa but, more importantly, the industrialized world and more economically affluent countries. This sad state of affairs provides a conspicuous example of this export of highly skilled human talent and fundamental resource. I myself, for instance, have encountered in recent years several doctors from the University of Ghana Medical School in one medical school alone in a country of the Gulf region.

I recently had the pleasure of taking part in the 25th anniversary celebrations of the University of Ghana Medical School. Let me quote from the silver jubilee documentary brochure of the University of Ghana Medical School the words of the Medical School’s Dean in 1985: “In terms of hard figures, the trends make disturbing reading. The percentage of staff in the establishment of posts has progressively dropped from 60 per cent in 1979 to 51 per cent in 1980 to as low as 32 per cent in 1984”, and it has about stabilized now around that figure. “The senior members have left for various reasons but chiefly for purely human reasons – the harsh realities of running a home, caring for and educating their children and looking after themselves. Many homes were on the verge of collapse. There is also the question of job satisfaction as practitioners with such severe and chronic shortages in supplies, drugs and rather obsolete equipment. Academic fulfillment was also wanting and research virtually ground to a halt.”

Whatever its complex causes, there is little doubt that the emigration of such highly trained and skilled people in all disciplines and professions, from all the universities and research centers from our countries in such numbers, affects almost all aspects of skilled manpower (qualified people in science and technology in particular being the most vulnerable, but the other areas no less so). Such a drain constitutes a particularly severe resource loss of scarce skilled people to the countries that have spent so much of their limited public funds on their education and training. While it may be easy to repair again dilapidated buildings, refurbish libraries and replace obsolete equipment in the short and medium term, over and above all this, what is urgent now is to be able to meet the twin challenges of attracting back to the various countries from abroad the skilled professionals, professors, lecturers, scientists,
scholars and researchers and to add to and retain all those being produced in the various institutions of higher education and research.

Providing the specific appropriate material incentives, improving political, economic and social conditions and attractive policies that guarantee job satisfaction is something that only the African nations themselves must undertake. Donors cannot by themselves do this, however well-motivated or benign they may be, although imaginative schemes like the UNDP Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) Programme can help to alleviate the problem of the emigration of skilled talent. One urgent task for education and institution building is thus to rebuild and put together as soon as possible a critical mass of teachers, researchers and practitioners for the African universities and research centers, and it is in this respect that selected, nodal centers can be identified and international donors and agencies can be involved in helping to strengthen them. The greatest need and challenge is to find the necessary modalities for strengthening national institutions on a sustained and comprehensive basis.

On the issue of the brain drain, I would like to suggest that the experience of the Asian countries like the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, can provide very useful lessons from which African countries can learn a lot. These nations did set up incentive schemes and mechanisms within a benign socio-economic framework that helped to attract back home quite a lot of their own highly trained expatriate people from the various industrialized countries who helped to fuel the revival of agriculture, commerce, higher education and hi-tech research within these nations and to transform them into the so-called newly industrializing countries (NICs).

The question of the brain drain and the need to attract back to Africa its highly skilled personnel working overseas is not unrelated to the wider issue of modernization, science and technology and their relationship with culture in Africa. It is now generally agreed that science and technology are unquestionably indispensable to modernization, and that failure to master science and technology spells an even greater doom in dependency and a dismal future for Africa in the emerging post-industrial and so-called information revolution now sweeping over the rest of the world. A revolution that is propelled by breakthroughs in such fields as microelectronics and microprocessors, biotechnology, satellite communication and imagery, and solar and renewable energy. Unquestionably, Africa is lowest in the scale in the growing technological gap between the developing and the developed countries. On this crucial issue, I believe the OAU now has to move from just theoretical interest and lip service to practical co-operative and sustained efforts. Much scientific and technological development has been accomplished in several Third World countries from the 30 years of international co-operation in research and development within the framework of the UN development decades. The experience gained from such multilateral and bilateral research and development efforts has led to agreement on some basic propositions and policy guidelines which the OAU now must seek effectively to transform into action. Basic science and its thorough mastery on a generalized national scale is an essential first step to any meaningful technology acquisition, creation and transfer. Technology is the product of a very specific human activity within certain socio-economic relations and cultural and value systems. The so-called transfer of technology is no more than the transfer of products of that technology with all the values and lifestyles in them. The mere transfer of technologies does
not lead to technology transfer unless one has the capacity to understand fully the knowledge and skills behind these techniques. Therefore, building national and regional research and development systems and improving one’s educational capability should be the major prerequisite for African countries to acquire effective technology and to hold their own in these global scientific and technological revolutions. The cultural dimension must be constantly borne in mind as well and indeed integrated into research and development programmes. The effective application of such research in the basic sciences and engineering should thus go hand in hand with advances in the social sciences and the humanities but within a different type of relationship between scientists and other peoples and between the R&D systems and the productive sector.

This implies, first and foremost, as a sine qua non for us in Africa, co-operation among our various. African countries and regions in the field of science and technology and also with other developing countries. Such co-operation, while strengthening the various national and collective capabilities, should also bring about an active and self-sustaining capacity internationally. It is only thereby that Africans can hope to participate on any ultimate basis of equality in the present post-industrial and information revolution to which I have already referred.

The task is therefore to harness recent advances in the new frontiers of science and technology so as to upgrade traditional skills and occupations. This challenge has been fully recognized by the UN system, which has proclaimed a Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1977), the major premise of which is the indispensability of the cultural dimension in the promotion of development.

As the distinguished Indian scientist, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, has aptly pointed out, “In the past, industrialization was synonymous with urbanization, centralization, automation and pollution. Today, it is possible to promote in rural areas” (and we need no reminder that the bulk of our population in Africa is rural) “sophisticated agro-industrial complexes based on decentralized infrastructure and production techniques that will help to marry the techniques of science with the culture and skills of the people. Science and technology are important components of the wall dividing poverty and prosperity. Today, there are unusual opportunities for all developing countries, especially those bypassed by the great benefits of science and technology, to improve the quality of life of their rural and urban poor through the integration of traditional and emerging technologies.”

To achieve success in all such development efforts calls not only for the appropriate strategies, policies and socio-cultural and political conditions. It requires, above all, the necessary human resources – the scientists, the technologists and the scholars who can only effectively operate within the necessary institutional framework such as universities and scientific research and development institutions. It calls for building the appropriate interdisciplinary networks of institutions cooperating on a national and regional basis to develop the research and training capabilities of our continent. This is an important and in fact an overriding challenge for the OAU.

Africa is a continent well endowed with natural resources, yet the least developed region as its present crisis shown. In the Lagos Plan of Action for Economic Development in Africa,
the OAU leaders have clearly recognized Africa’s special needs, which require particular attention and concentration. They have singled out the glaring lack of appropriate research and development institutions of the requisite caliber and resources in Africa as one of the major factors for Africa’s relative backwardness among the developing countries and for its declining output in all key sectors. Especially so for its failure to achieve national food security systems such as Asian countries have been able to build. Seven years have passed since then, and it is now time to put the Plan of Action into action.

The requisite initiatives, therefore, must now be strongly undertaken under the auspices of the OAU. One such step is the Regional Food and Nutrition Project which the UN University and the Association of African Universities are jointly undertaking with African institutions. Another major effort is the proposed United Nations University Institute for Natural Resources for Africa (INRA), an initiative in response to the Lagos Plan of Action and to the demands of African scientists and scholars. Its principal objective is to help strengthen existing national and regional institutions and enable them to operate at a higher level so as to make a real contribution to the effective use and management of the continent’s rich natural resources. As INRA’s prospectus puts it, “The plight of the continent calls not only for immediate disaster relief but also for sustained medium and long-term scientific and technological research and training development efforts.” One must here commend such initiatives as the recent establishment of the African Academy of Sciences and the Brazzaville Conference of African Scientists sponsored by the OAU in 1987. These encouraging steps need to be strongly supported.

As I already noted, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the World Decade for Cultural Development, which will end in 1997, shortly before the year 2000. The adoption of this decade gives very strong recognition to the decisive role which culture is to play in the promotion of development. Greater emphasis is to be placed on the cultural dimension in the developmental process and in the stimulation of creative skills and cultural life in general as an essential ingredient for any progress in such development activities.

How can Africa benefit from this global effort to broaden the definition of culture and place it at the center of development? What part will Africa play in this “new moral and social contract” that would remedy the shortcomings – and failures – of a certain narrow conception of development? As UNESCO's *A Practical Guide to the World Decade for Cultural Development, 1988-97* puts it: “Henceforward, the individual is no longer considered as a mere ‘agent of progress’; he or she must be seen as an integral whole within the society of which he or she is an active member and raison d’etre.”

UNESCO, in order to give concrete form to this programme, has worked out four major objectives in its plan of action, which seeks to acknowledge the cultural dimension in development, assert and enhance cultural identities, broaden participation in cultural life, and promotes international cultural co-operation. UNESCO foresees that, as the decade advances, member states will work out specific programmes and implement these in co-operation also with international organizations involved. The question, therefore, to be asked is how the OAU and its various agencies can participate effectively in helping to place culture at the center of African development and in the efforts to achieve an integration between traditional and the modern processes which are essential for its advancement into the twenty-first
century. Again, as the Practical Guide puts it, “...it is recognized that true growth must go hand in hand with respect for the environment and for the quality of life. Wastage of energy is considered harmful and greater account is being taken of the quality of human relationships as well as individual and community lifestyles. In developing countries, the desire to combine progress, justice and solidarity with respect for specific cultural values has become increasingly clear.”

Finally, there is the ethical and moral dimension of leadership. The question then is: how can the African states within the framework of the OAU move from theory to praxis, from concept to actual effective implementation? That is one of the challenges that now lie ahead.

It is necessary to establish, as soon as possible, for various countries of the continent priorities for the most cost-effective means of achieving immediate relief and medium and long-term solution to the socio-economic, political and, above all, cultural dilemma in which the continent finds itself. The continent must build up the capacity to implement such strategies without delay.

What we have been saying coincides with the World Bank Report’s general conclusion which states as follows that: “The stock of human capital will determine whether Africans can harness the universal explosion of scientific and technical knowledge for the region’s benefit or whether Africa will fall farther and farther behind the world’s industrial nations.” “Above all, education is a basic right, an intrinsic part of life and development. When all the benefits of education are considered, the case for the revitalization and expansion of schooling and training in Africa is compelling even in this period of unusual scarcity.”

Notes
3. Ibid., p. 12.
4. Ibid., p. 39.
11. Ibid., p. 18.
Debate

Chairman: L.B.B.J. Machobane

Akin Mabogunje

I would like to pose one question dealing with the philosophy of education. One of the major problems in our educational effort has been that we have been concerned with literacy in its difference forms up to the university level. We called this education. As a result, you have now educated people, but educated for what? This is referred to as the popular dilemma in education. What is our philosophy for education as countries and as a continent? We have been stimulating basically a salary-oriented education, where the fact that one is educated was considered enough to be able to earn a salary. Not enough emphasis was laid on the ideals of productivity and bettering a country.

Francis Deng

Dr. Kwapong’s presentation has left me somewhat troubled which I can best express in terms of the tension between the externalization of education and the increasing realization of the need to internalize or become inward-looking. Emphasis was given to the dimension of culture as an overriding theme and on the philosophy and purpose of education. It seems to me that education is really a transmission of knowledge accumulated by a particular cultural heritage, community or people over a long period of time aimed at certain objectives. When we speak of philosophy and the goals of education we are really talking of both objectives of education and sources of knowledge. There is no doubt that in most, if not all, African traditional cultures, there is no concept of knowledge for knowledge sake. Knowledge has certain inherent objectives. In the tradition I come from, the word for knowledge is usually “knowledge of the words”. This implies that when conveying or teaching someone knowledge of words, a person inherently or implicitly is also imparting advice – on how to conduct oneself in life. So there is an inherent moral message in the transmission of knowledge. Some of us may say that knowledge for knowledge sake is good but we have to assume that somewhere along the line it is aimed at something. In addition to knowledge of words, there is knowledge of skills, the way you conduct yourself, you live your life, raise cattle, rear children, all of that has a certain element of skill involved which is part of what the older generation transmits to the younger generation. We know that anthropologists who have studied us have tended to emphasize the lineage systems and some moral and spiritual knowledge on the one hand. Technical skill and knowledge on the other hand has not always been well maintained. Our equipment, through education, to deal with the problems of life has become increasingly externalized, and that reservoir of knowledge that had to do with the practical realities of the world we lived in was undermined. It is interesting that today we find increasingly that experts who are called upon to evaluate certain projects in rural areas say that they have learnt so much from the local people and that the technology developed by the local people is really the best suited to both the agricultural and farming environment. So now we are being told what is good in what we have been made to look away from. But the problem runs deeper. For instance, the curriculum for law which is taught at the University of Khartoum, one of the oldest in black Africa, is totally irrelevant to the administration of
justice for some 99% of the Sudanese who are still being governed by customary law. I returned home to do research into customary law and it took London University and later Yale University to permit me to use that material to produce studies which are being used abroad as part of the overall knowledge of jurisprudence of African laws. But these books are not available to the very people for whom they were intended. We do not value this as a source of knowledge because we have been made to think that knowledge essentially means what we are receiving from outside from those who have extracted, or dislodged us from that background. This is the dilemma. Aren’t we really caught in the same dilemma that we have been discussing in relationship to development in general? We associate development with what we are receiving from external sources. Isn’t our view of knowledge really a mirror of that dilemma? How are you really going to persuade our people to look back and make use of knowledge which is indigenous, at a time when we are being told that this is really backward and primitive and that we should conceive of knowledge as scientific and technical – the sources of which are external? Can you really maintain a healthy balance by building on that indigenous knowledge while opening avenues for the African to move into the global arena and acquire sources of knowledge that have no limit? Or, similarly, make use of the economic resourcefulness of the African, including his very small technologies, while at the same time leaving the world wide open to the African to achieve economic levels that can be as good as anybody else’s. Or rather make use of African medical expertise among local people but at the same time make it possible for the African to have access to modern medicine at all levels. What method do we have to create these balances which are so delicate and precarious?

Alex Kwapong

The dilemma is obvious. I referred to relevant, meaningful education that will serve the needs of the society and individuals brought up in the society. It is quite clear that it is only we ourselves who can marry the internal to the external dimensions that we need. There must be reflective, thoughtful people who would rewrite the curricula, for instance of the legal or medical programmes – which should not only be concerned with pharmacology but also with the native pharmacopoeia- to enable this to fit in with the reality of the society in question. This should be accepted as one of the necessary steps. To absorb external ill-digested ideas without reflecting, adapting or evolving from our own circumstances is simply a waste of time. So the point is well taken. An education which fits the cultural identity of an individual has to be approached in different layers: at the basic level of primary education; the education and training of the person should be made to fit in with his environment, to make a living. He must be taught the same sort of skills that are being taught to his counterparts elsewhere within their own societies. Without the knowledge of his own history, the geography of his country, the social dynamics of his own culture, he may be a skilled technician but he would not be a very useful one. It is a dynamic process that must begin from within. Such philosophic reflections should come from within the institutions and not, for example, from the Institute of Education in London. It is for the professors, the students, the people in the Ministry of education and all the people concerned to be very much aware of the challenge of working out a curriculum that provides for these purposes. A person in the educational system must be a citizen of his country but subject to both internal and external challenges. There must be high quality institutions that are built from the roots but come to terms with the relation with science and technology, which is taking place outside.
We should be able to speak on the same wavelength but as Africans, not as pseudo white-men, Frenchmen or Anglophones. There are various dimensions of this internal/external educational process, and the whole issue of internal and external efficiency of the system itself is fundamental. The internal efficiency of the educational system requires that the individual should be educated to a higher and more fulfilled identity. The external efficiency is a question of management – i.e. there should be enough people to deal with a generator, to make sure it doesn’t break down, etc. You need an integrated, culturally coherent educational system to produce these results. Essentially the challenge for education is how to produce a modern African who responds to the internal, spiritual and human needs of the African on the one hand and on the other to the challenge of living in a global community where science and technology have reached a level of profundity with which he should be familiar. This is basically what has happened in Japan. The Japanese are essentially Japanese but they are also prepared to learn from outside and they have highlighted the importance of learning as opposed to just training as one of the important elements in their lives. Every ordinary worker reads a magazine, in his lunch break, which may well be the equivalent of The Economist. This is the basic challenge that must be accepted as such.

Olusegun Obasanjo

I fully concur that education is an intrinsic part of life and development. Education is a prerequisite to development. As you examined recently the problems of the university system in Nigeria, what would be your specific prescription in this area? Also, you talked about academic freedom. What exactly do you mean by this? What should it involve? Our universities come out of the necessity of our economic and social situation, unlike the way Cambridge or Oxford sprang up. Freedom for whom? Freedom for your colleagues in the university to continue to set up curricula which we do not need? That the founders of the university should not have an input as to what men, women, what discipline should come out and to do what? No rationalization? No say in the manpower training, the job opportunities we give for them? When I was in government, we started universal primary education. At my that time, I was visiting a country and my host told me that they have free education from the cradle to the grave”. The minister who was with me pointed out that I did not ask his President what he did with the products of his education. When I did ask, the Minister replied that he puts them in a goal. If education is supposed to be unbounded, to open new horizons, shouldn’t we also make sure that the unbridled factor of education is not in any other form bound by measures, programmes and policies which we will bring out? I am talking of this in the context of leadership. It is one thing to talk about education and learning, it is another thing to allow people to develop fully and have the full development of their capacities and capabilities as a result of the education they have had.

Dragoljub Najman

What I wrote 1971 in a book on education in Africa is still valid today. Firstly, Africa is losing the battle against illiteracy because the system itself is inefficient. It is externally inefficient, as it does not relate to the needs of the society. The net result of its internal inefficiency is a tremendous rise in costs, particularly in view of the demographic push. Unless we deal with the problems of internal efficiency we will not be able to optimize the costs of education. This is an immediate concern – all those children are already born, so they
have to be educated, even as their numbers are steadily rising. The major problem of the education system in Africa is that there are no "African" universities. Education is so constructed that it is the highest level that dictates the conditions to the lowest. Therefore, the tertiary level dictates the profile of the secondary and, by necessity, the secondary sets the profile of the primary. The major and central problem since independence is that there has not been an attempt to conceive top level African educational institutions instead of mere, albeit excellent copies of European and American models. We know that there is no transfer of science, there is transfer of technology and it is only the development of science that should be a basic condition in African universities. The contradiction between the university and the society exists mainly because those universities have been created according to foreign models and are not creations stemming from the environment. Let me also comment on the various levels. As educational science proved, it is not necessary for a child to go to school for 9 or 10 months in a year over 6 years to be taught basic arithmetic and literacy. This is done because the developed society that conceived the system does not know what to do with children when they are not in school. Shouldn’t education be optimized in such a way that children not only go to school? People in the villages would know exactly what to do with children when they are not at school. The curriculum should then be adapted to an appropriate concentrated form. At the secondary education level, it is indeed progress to have more vocational schools, but what kind? It is useless if it is just the same as in other parts of the world. There is just no secondary education in Africa that is designed to prepare students to be able to be immediately productive. It is instead designed to prepare young people to enter tertiary education. How can more be achieved with less and how can certain phases be jumped which appear necessary, yet in fact are not? We have to cut the length of the educational cycle, which in a variety of countries is 2 or 3 years shorter than in Europe, without resulting in a poorer quality. Africa follows in the main the example of Europe. A totally different approach to school years could also be adopted such as different periods, which are then more integrated into the climatic and prevailing economic life of countries. This would allow a better use of school buildings, laboratories, libraries, auditoriums, for the training of educators. A shorter school year for children would allow enough time for the same educators to work with the population. Finally, could modern technology not play a very substantial role in promoting education, especially in lowering the costs?

**Stanley Mogoba**

Pre-school education should also be mentioned because it is becoming increasingly the crucial area in education. We should also be aware of a general feeling of unease and dissatisfaction among the young concerning their education, essentially saying that something must be done to make the education closer to what our aspirations are as young people working for a better Africa. Perhaps we can suggest a political theory or philosophy that might be injected into education in Africa.

**Anezi Okoro**

We should focus back on the foundations upon which we built. We should invent a step whereby we could sidestep bureaucratic shackles and the suffocating power of government in helping our children get educated; and we should see if we can get really committed to what we are saying, rather than just preach them. Whenever we consider free, universal primary
education, the question is how do you fund it? Every successful person who has reached any height in life, has passed through a primary school, whether he is a head of state, a professor or a businessman, etc. If each person was to endow his primary school with but one facility that will aid school life, be it a library, farm, sports equipment, stationery or school meals, would it not help to maintain a cycle in which each primary school becomes so fully endowed that it will continue to produce successful people who will continue to endow it in perpetuity? This would be a means of solving the funding problem. This could equally be applied to the secondary and tertiary levels. Yes, our primary school curriculum is inefficient. Part of our children’s time should be spent working. If this concept were to be inculcated at the primary school level then it would be easy to develop it in the secondary schools.

Jean Herskovits

Much has been said concerning the question of adult literacy but there is another dimension that is quite important. Professor Kwapong talked about the Japanese sitting at breaks reading. Although it is true that in cities one sees Africans reading the newspaper it is not so common to see people taking every opportunity to be reading something – sometimes it is very difficult to find the light to read. Is it desirable to go into a crash programme in adult literacy from the point of view, among others, of the very important communication between leadership and follower-ship?

Victor Mpoyo

Let me raise the question of cultural symbiosis. The education which has been imported or created on the outside is indeed important. The symbiosis encompasses the form of instruction and the formative education, the philosophy and the way of thinking. Africa is still searching for herself, even though we have a traditional base which is still alive and which we could use to form the basis of our political doctrine. Our continent is rich in tradition and philosophies but we are always the last to make use of them. We have not made an effort to re-knot our dialogues with our basic culture and form this symbiosis to create something new. If we do not mentally de-colonize and rekindle confidence in ourselves, we shall become and achieve nothing.

Zamani Lekwot

My comment will be based on the Nigerian experience. Up to 1970, education in this country was the business of everybody – parents, missionaries, private individuals, local, regional and federal governments, and provisional administrations. After the civil war, some state governments made the mistake of taking over some of the private schools. The day we launched the universal primary education (UPE) in 1976, more children turned up than those registered for class 1. And so it started on the wrong foot with shortages of materials, teachers and classrooms. The transition rate from primary to secondary level is very lopsided, basically because of lack of classroom space at the secondary schools. The lack of opportunity to continue education accounts in part for the frustration and high crime rate. We need to go back to what we had before 1970. Ideally, government should provide free education for all although the enormous financial burden this would entail requires a rethinking. The problems with UPE should cause the government to re-examining its
priorities and lay emphasis on the primary level as the crucial part of the education of youth. After six years in primary schools and three years in a junior secondary school, a citizen can be said to be literate. Then follows another three years in senior secondary school and the next four years are tertiary education level.

The neglect of the critical balance accounts in the main for our brain drain. Our children, upon returning from Europe where they were trained in schools equipped with the best facilities, find that, for instance, there are no tools in the hospitals back home, no drugs, etc. and they get frustrated and leave. They also lack the cultural angle and this would help us more if we could recast our educational system taking into consideration our traditional value system and our heritage. There can be no sense in education without job opportunities and graduates must have the opportunity to be productive. Government must also provide the infrastructure to absorb the graduates. This means opening up the countryside, creating an environment that is conducive to profitable business so that the private sector is encouraged to establish the industries which will absorb these young people. People with the right bent should be encouraged to establish urban schools. The moral teaching in schools has deteriorated because the teachers themselves are frustrated – they are not paid a regular income. The government's decision to pay 75% of the salaries of all teachers will go a long way in helping to motivate the teachers once it is fully implemented.

**Lopo do Nascimento**

My country, Angola, has taken three decisions to help raise resources for education. First, in my province – Huila province – the state has given the responsibility for an area between 5 and 10 hectares of land to the village chief which is called “the land of the teacher”. The village chiefs and all villagers, especially those who have children in the village school, must work these fields with the pupils. The state then guarantees the purchase of the products from these fields at a higher price than elsewhere. Second, a tourism tax has been created which is directly allocated to the education budget. All restaurants and bars pay this tax. Third, we have decided that each company – public or private – that does not have illiterates among its work force pays less tax than do those with illiterates. We have taken such measures to involve everyone in solving those problems that the state cannot resolve on its own. For the current school year, 40% of the education budget will be financed from these revenues. It is not much but it is something, given the fact that with the structural adjustment policies, resources for education keep getting less and less.

**Alexander Kwapong**

The fact that the problems of the 1970s are the problems of the 1980s shows how intractable the problems of Africa are. The crisis we are involved in now has led to almost paralysis. There have been promising developments to try and achieve effective change in the African situation based upon the African condition. What has happened, is that somehow the crisis has overhauled almost every aspect of our economic, social and cultural life, and education has suffered most in the process. We must come back to the basics and reflect on priorities. Without a basic healthy foundation, i.e. primary education and literacy, you cannot build anything. In my presentation I subsumed the basic fact that adult literacy – the total education of the community – is our primary objective. The priorities to be pursued must be shaped
according to our resources and according to the needs of each country. You need innovativeness to achieve the desire for a level of education in the community as a whole. But education for what? The combination of work and study is an obvious point. Then, innovative adjustments are necessary in the management of educational systems. Shorter school years scheduled in accordance with the climatic, geographical and occupational needs of the society – these are some of the adjustments that people have talked about but haven’t done much about. The time actually given to instruction and the internal and external efficiency of the system are issues we should take seriously. However, unless we internalize the experience gained outside of Africa we shall make the same mistakes again. A blind application of innovation might lead to consequences that are not efficient. Expatriates or outsiders cannot determine the suitability of innovations. Political and cultural authenticity in education is required to make the African an individual human being as well as a member of society. Success can only be achieved if the educational system brings out all the qualities in an individual. One significant aspect is the importance of unit costs and their cost effectiveness. With the lack of resources you have to choose shortcuts. The challenge is to choose efficient shortcuts that will yield correct results. It is said that it costs a lot more to educate a student in an African university than abroad. But when you examine it properly, you see that in some of these universities the university Vice-Chancellor is also the Lord Mayor of the town. He has to provide housing, water, food etc. before the actual primary functions of a university can take place. Clearly, better accounting, efficient management, evaluation of the costs of these municipal services and the actual academic cost would enable the community to see how efficient the institution is in delivering its genuine products. If education once more becomes the top priority of our society and if the aim is high-quality, cost-effective and relevant education, then we can achieve the appropriate balance according to the historical circumstances of each country. General Obasanjo inquired about the World Bank mission to review the universities in Nigeria. The Government was negotiating with the World Bank to obtain resources to finance the system in order to make it more capable of meeting the challenges. Thus, the mission was focusing mainly on the formulation of eligibility criteria, whereby universities, voluntarily, will try to improve efficiency and thereby can earn the right to get more resources for teaching, research and general needs. Let me also return to the question of academic freedom. The task is to ensure that persons will cooperate more, share resources and material better and rationalize the use of these resources in order to promote the development of higher education in the country. What is the nature of academic freedom? More often than not it is assumed that one is arguing for academic license, lack of responsibility to national needs and the freedom to do as one likes without reference to national priorities. The essence of academic freedom is simply a matter of efficiency. If the best people will be given the responsibility to design a curriculum, to appoint staff, promote and fire them – if they have the right to teach and to learn, unfettered, and to deal with every subject on objective, academic and scientific grounds – then that institution will be efficient. But if the institution is second-guessed all the time and if another institution, with some government participation, monitors its every move, it cannot be efficient. These modalities must be observed and the universities must stick to their mandate, as the other side of the coin is academic responsibility, i.e. the choice of priorities and targets within certain guidelines set by the government. These guidelines should be worked out through really open and efficient interaction. If the universities are always being told whom to appoint, and if suspicions exist whether promotions are influenced by tribal affiliations, then the whole process breaks down. Academic freedom is essential to teach, research and be
open to critical dissent based upon the available facts and subject to the critique it is given. Unfortunately, it is a proven fact that academic freedom is subverted more from within than from outside. African governments should fairly and squarely shoulder the responsibility for providing primary education and making sure that everybody has a fair share. But there is room at the top level, particularly for the international community, to assist with foreign exchange and other needs. The private sector has a very important role to play and private initiative should not be stifled.

Summing up: firstly, we have to analyze the present educational, political and social crisis. Secondly, we must take the necessary measures and try to work out priorities. Thirdly, we have to have the political will and vision to implement the priority choices. Fourthly, this exercise must be subject to open and free critique through the domestic democratic process and through interaction with international organizations. And the fifth point is that we have to apply the modern methods of production that will ensure that the average person can realize his right to receive an efficient education from which he can benefit and to which he can contribute. That is the challenge ahead of us.
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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7. Thomas A. LAMBO (Nigeria), President, Lambo Foundation for the Advancement of Biomedical and Bio-behavioural Sciences; former Deputy Director-General, World Health Organisation
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11. A.M.A. MUHITHA (Bangladesh), Former Finance and Planning Minister
12. Col. Raji RASAKI (Nigeria), Military Governor of Lagos State.
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15. Zamani LEKWOT (Nigeria), Major-General (rtd.), former Governor of Rivers State, former Nigerian Ambassador to Senegal
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Background Note

The Africa Leadership Forum

Despite over a quarter of a century of political independence, Africa’s aspirations and hopes remain today largely unfulfilled. This has not been, however, a period of unmitigated failure in the history of the continent. There have been successes in education, public health, import substitution industries, and in the continuing process of de-colonization. The problems of development, peace and security, the health of the world economy, and improving the environment are interrelated global issues, as they do not admit of piecemeal solutions.

And yet all countries find that in the absence of true global cooperation, they have to tackle particular aspects of them. At the national as well as the regional level in Africa today, the inadequacy of information, data, and resources further complicates an already daunting problematic state of affairs. African leaders have frequently come to leadership positions with limited experience. Though most of them have often battled on, confronting their awesome problems of development and nation-building essentially not only unprepared but unaided, their efforts have been, at best, only a qualified success.

It is quite clear therefore that Africa cannot afford to continue its journey with ill-prepared and unassisted leaders. Those on whom the burden of leadership will fall in future must fully comprehend the nature of their responsibilities, duties, and obligations. In other words, they must be given all the necessary exposure and carefully planned preparation to be able to meet the challenges that they will inevitably face.

This new task is all the more apparent when one considers the level of preparedness of our leaders of tomorrow who are clearly not bothered by anything other than the pursuit of their professional careers. They have little time to devote neither to acquiring a comprehensive knowledge of their own countries and their region nor of the cultures of their diverse peoples. Nor even to learning about and understanding the actions taken by their present leaders where they do not impinge on their own areas of expertise.

Most young potential leaders have focused primarily on single issues, lacking time to look at wider, critical regional and world challenges. The time for comprehensive study and reflection, for sharing experiences with persons inside, let alone outside their countries, region, and field of concentration is very limited. Opportunities for such detached discussions and contemplation are even rarer.

This problem is however not helped by the dearth of private institutions in Africa that are devoted to preparing potential leaders with that essential global outlook, which will enable them to cooperate within and across national, regional, and institutional boundaries. Furthermore, it has become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, in many African countries to gain access to relevant and timely information on most national, regional, and global issues.
Experience in and out of Government and in international forum bears out this situation, one that must definitely be addressed and remedied. One solution in this regard is to launch the “Africa Leadership Forum”, and to charge it with the task of conducting a series of meetings which may be national, sub-regional, regional and international in dimension and may vary in duration. The purpose will be to enhance the knowledge and awareness of current and young, potential African leaders, placing special emphasis on diagnosing apparent failures of the past; on understanding multiple dimensions and complex interrelations of local, national, regional, and global problems; and on seeking out appropriate solutions.
Objectives

The purpose of the forum is to encourage a thorough diagnosis, broad understanding, and an informed search for solutions to local, regional and global problems, taking full account of their interrelationships and mutual consequences.

To that end, the Forum will develop, organize and support programmes for the training of young and promising Africans with leadership potential so as to expose them to the demands, duties and obligations of leadership positions and to prepare them systematically for assuming higher responsibilities and meeting the challenges of an interdependent world.

The Forum will also endeavour to generate greater understanding and enhance the knowledge and awareness of development and social problems, within a global context, among young, potential leaders from all sectors of society, cutting across national, regional, continental, professional and institutional borders. This may foster close and enduring relationship among participants, relationships promoting life-long association and cooperation.

Furthermore, the Forum will support and encourage the informed search for appropriate and effective solutions to local and regional African problems and to global problems from an African perspective – within the framework of global interdependence. This will nevertheless include the consideration of phased action programmes, which can be initiated by various countries, sub-regions and institutions in the continent.

In addition, there will be specific weekend seminars organized as Farm-House Dialogues to be held quarterly.
Financial Aspects

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