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**Governance reforms in higher education:**  
**A study of selected countries in Africa**

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## **Governance reforms in higher education: A study of selected countries in Africa\***

**N.V. Varghese\*\***

### **1. Introduction**

The developments over the past decades indicate that globally the higher education sector has moved from a state of decline and disrepair to a state of revival and revitalization in this century. The 1980s was a period of decline of higher education when student enrolment declined even in the developed countries (Altbach, 1984) and the developing countries, especially in Africa, experienced a state of erosion of facilities and capacities (Kinyanjui, 1994; Mamdani, 1993; Saint, 1992). The fiscal crisis and the resultant decline in state funding were considered to be a major cause of the decline.

The higher education system in the developed countries was fast in responding to the decline through 'cut back management' policies and measures to withdraw public subsidies. The developing countries were slow and delayed in their response, although they too adopted reforms to reduce cost (including staff reduction, a freeze on new appointments, and a freeze on increase in staff salary, etc.), share cost, generate income, and to improve efficiency of the system. Some of the reforms drove academic staff away from the university jobs to other more lucrative avenues of employment within the country and migration to other countries. Some of these policies also led to a deterioration of physical facilities and academic standards, contributing to a sharp decline in the quality of teaching and research.

These trends are reversed in this century in the developing countries, notably in Africa. Between 2000 and 2010, the system not only expanded considerably adding more than 7.7 million students annually, but the developing countries also accounted for a major share of this increase in enrolment; budgetary allocation to higher education increased; staff salaries improved, as did teaching-learning conditions, leading to a revival of the sector. Today the rates of growth of higher education are the highest in countries in Africa, although their enrolment base still continues to be low. It is important to note that the expansion of the system in this millennium was relying increasingly on non-state funding.

The revival and revitalization of the sector reflecting increased resource availability, new programmes, and diversified provisions are results of the reforms implemented in the sector. These reforms helped to reduce reliance on state funding and state control on institutional governance and management, made institutions autonomous and self-reliant, and made households willing investors in higher education. These changes altered the way the higher education system is governed and institutions are managed. This paper attempts to elaborate on these changes in Africa based on the case studies carried out in some of the countries in the region.

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The plan of the paper is as follows: The next section discusses the global changes in higher education and their effects on the expansion of higher education. Section 3 deals with development of higher education in Africa focusing more on the initial concerns and orientations, followed by a discussion on reforms and expansion of higher education in Africa in Section 4. Section 5 focusses on the reform measures studied in the case study countries and their effects in Section 6. Section 7 tries to analyze whether or not these reforms improved the sector as a whole, and the final section attempts to conclude by generalizing some trends seen in the case study countries.

## **2. Global context of higher education expansion**

The higher education sector has experienced a surge in growth in this century, and its expansion has become a global phenomenon encompassing countries in all regions. An increasing recognition of its economic and social value, no doubt, has contributed to increased propensity to invest in higher education by the public authorities, private corporations and households.

In terms of its economic value, higher education plays an important role in the production and distribution of national income. While the knowledge produced and skills imparted by the sector contribute to faster growth in national income, an expansion of the system contributes to more equal sharing of the national income. With expansion of the knowledge economy, the knowledge produced by the system and the skills possessed by its graduates are becoming deciding factors in promoting economic progress and social welfare.

Research evidence indicates that knowledge has been the single-most important engine of growth and the driving force of economic performance in OECD countries over the past decades (OECD, 2000; UIS/OECD, 2003). Therefore, it is recognized now, more than ever before, that the universities and research organizations influence the economic competitiveness of individual economies in the context of globalization. The countries which have an expanded system of higher education with higher levels of investment in research and development (R&D) activities have higher potential to grow faster in a globalized knowledge economy.

The use of knowledge, even when it is produced outside, depends on the human capacity to access, assimilate and absorb it. Education no doubt enhances the human capacity and choice to improve accessibility. A broad-based higher education provides “the necessary foundation for a productive, prosperous and resilient country (Group of Eight, 2013, p.7). That is one of the reasons why countries with universal higher education systems are economically more competitive than others.

The other aspect, namely the role of higher education in income distribution, is also equally important. Higher education contributes to improved individual income through different channels. First, the labour force participation rates of the higher educated are consistently higher than those who are less educated. In the case of women, participation rates vary significantly between those who are university-level educated and those who are school-level educated (UIS-OECD, 2003). The labor force participation rate of women increases with every level of education, and it improves significantly with the tertiary level of education and thus comes closer to their male counterparts. From this point of view, women gain more than men by obtaining higher level qualifications.

Second, higher educated persons get into sectors and jobs which are higher paying, leading to an enhanced average income of the educated in general. Third, the skill premium enjoys a wage premium in the labor market, especially in the context of globalization. And in the recent past, the earning advantages associated with those in elite occupations increased considerably. All these factors show that it is beneficial to pursue higher education since it increases employability and the chances of being employed in the high-wage sector. Fourth, the unemployment rate increases with levels of education in most cases up to the secondary education level and declines thereafter. Therefore, enrolling in tertiary education institutions and graduating from them reduce the chances of being unemployed.

Recent estimates of rates of returns to investment in education show that returns to higher education are not only on the increase but also surpass that of the other levels of education. This is contrary to the evidence generated in the 1960s and 1970s (World Bank, 2002) where returns to primary education were higher than those at other levels. The earning advantage of higher education graduates (men) over secondary school graduates varies from 82 per cent in Indonesia to almost 300 per cent in Paraguay. For women, the corresponding variations are from 55 per cent in Indonesia to 179 per cent in Brazil (UIS-OECD, 2003).

In a sense, at the individual level higher education is one of the best choices for increased lifetime earnings and the best unemployment insurance. For nations' investments in higher education and knowledge production are rewarding and a growth promoting factor especially in the knowledge economies. However, knowledge gap continues to be "one of the most important social and economic divides in modern democratic societies" (Bergan, 2005: p.15) and therefore bridging this gap becomes an essential step to promote more equal growth among nations and within countries.

Globalization of production demands standardized skills and training to meet global standards irrespective of location of production. Many of these skills and competencies are developed mostly at the post-secondary level of education. In other words, the knowledge-driven production of goods and services increases the demand for higher educated manpower. It can be seen that the proportion of employees with higher levels of education are increasing in the developed countries which are more knowledge-based than others (World Bank, 2002).

Apart from the economic arguments, there are pressures to expand higher education stemming from the success of EFA programmes of the past decades where by the number of secondary school graduates seeking higher education has surged. The other side of the story is that with the expansion of education at the school level the demand for the number of university graduates to be employed as teachers increased. Therefore, expansion of higher education is propelled by larger pool of school graduates eligible for admission in higher education institutions and compulsions of expanding lower levels of education.

From the social point of view, many of the social indicators of development improve once the level of education increases. In any case, one of the arguments for an expanded higher education is that less-educated people are better off in a well-educated society than in a society with a mediocre level of education (Weber, 2005). This in a sense justifies the expansion of higher education, even when its effects are unequally distributed.

### *Who should finance the expansion?*

When higher education was a small sector catering to the elites, it was highly subsidized and was funded by the state in most countries. When expansion of the sector became rapid, attracting even the first generation learners to higher education, the debate on financing of higher education even became very lively. At one end are those who consider higher education to be a public good to be funded entirely by the state, and at the other end are those who argue that it brings huge individual dividends and hence should be financed privately and traded publicly – higher education should be treated as a commodity to be traded in the market just like any other commodity. This idea lies at the heart of bringing education under the General Agreement of Trade in Services (GATS) (Knight, 2002; AAU, 2004; Tilak, 2011).

Many economists have argued that knowledge is a public good (Samuelson, 1954) and some consider it to be a global public good (Stiglitz, 1999) implying the non-rivalrous consumption and non-excludability in its distribution. The communique adopted by the ministers on the Bologna process in the Prague Higher Education Summit stated that “higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility” (Bergan, 2005: p.13). One of the major policy implications of categorizing higher education as a public good is that, in the absence of state investment, it will be under-produced and under-supplied.

Even when doubts are cast on the public goods characteristics of higher education, no one doubts the externalities due to higher education. The external benefits of higher education imply that collective returns to investments in higher education are greater than the sum of individual returns. Markets may not take into account these external benefits and will under-invest in higher education (Jonathan, 2001; Tilak, 2008). Since higher education produces external benefits, the state has to intervene to avoid under-provision. It is this understanding that promoted state funding in higher education.

The state played a dominant role in development during the post-World War II reconstruction phase in Europe and nation-building phase following national independence in the developing countries. Most countries invested in higher education during this phase, recognizing the importance of qualified and trained manpower in nation building. There was, in a sense, a ‘state monopoly on tertiary education’ (World Bank, 2002: p.69) and public universities became the dominant feature of the development of higher education. This tradition continues and public universities continue to dominate in all regions except Latin America and East Asia.

The state-led model of development came under attack in the 1980s. The neo-liberal thinking, structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s, and the political changes in Eastern Europe questioned the role of the state in development and the rationale for continued state investment in higher education. The argument was for a reduced public investment in education in general, and a diversion of public investment from higher to primary education in developing countries in particular (World Bank, 1986; Banya and Elu, 2001).

The market-friendly reforms and globalization processes in recent decades gave strength to the argument for expanding higher education without placing additional burden on the public exchequer. Households and private sources are increasingly supporting the increasing social demand for higher education. Consequently, developed and developing countries reduced, if

not withdrew, subsidies to higher education and introduced cost-recovery measures, cost-sharing strategies, and income-generating activities (Sanyal, 1995; Ishengoma, 2004) in public higher education institutions to expand. These entrepreneurial universities (Clark, 1998) helped expand enrolment without burdening public exchequers.

In terms of changes in the governance of public institutions, MOEs reduced their powers mostly to overall policy, strategic planning, coordination, and fund negotiations with other ministries (of finance) and foreign agencies; many governments transferred the responsibilities of higher education and its governance to the provincial level, delegated powers to buffer organizations, and granted autonomy to institutions (Fielden, 2008).

This period also experienced the emergence of the private sector in higher education, especially in many of the developing countries, which did not have a tradition of any private higher education institutions. Provision, production and financing higher education can be entirely by the state, by market or by a combination of the two. As discussed above, the state (public universities) is losing its monopoly in provision and production and a totally market-relied process (private for-profit institutions) does not exist anywhere as the dominant provider of higher education. What is increasingly becoming a common practice in provision of higher education is that public funds are allocated more on the basis of market principles, and markets in higher education very often are not confined to for-profit entities (Weber, 2005).

The enrolment in higher education globally increased from 100 to 177.7 million between 2000 and 2010 (UIS, 2012) reflecting an average annual increase in enrolment of more than 7.7 million students in the previous decade. The world average in GER in 2010 is 29 per cent. However, the GER not only varies across regions but also widened over a period of time. For example, the GER varies from seven per cent in sub-Saharan Africa to 76 per cent in North America and Western Europe. The GER more than doubled between 1991 and 2010 in the Arab region (from 11 to 24 per cent), more than quadrupled in East Asia and the Pacific (from seven to 29 per cent), increased to almost three times (from six to 17 per cent) in South and West Asia, and more than doubled (from 17 to 41 per cent) in Latin America. What is important to notice is that this fast expansion of the sector is very often taking place with non-state funding.

### **3. Higher education development in Africa**

Developments in the higher education sector in Africa also followed some of the global trends discussed above. At the time of independence, most of the African countries heavily relied on external experts to manage the economy. The idea of ‘development universities’ (Cloete et al., 2011) underlined the role of universities in development to meet the human resource needs of the economy. During and after the national liberation struggles, there was a serious effort to Africanize the administration and decision making. “The first step in African independence was to put Africans at the top of the government ... Africanization has everywhere gone more quickly than the colonials anticipated ... There has consequently been a strongly expansionist view of higher education” (Sutton, 1971).

One of the important roles played by the higher education sector in the post-independence period in many countries is that of the indigenization (nationalization) of development. This indigenization process was necessary at least in two aspects: a) indigenization development;

and b) indigenization of education (Atal, 1995). The former implied the replacement of expatriates in administration and decision-making positions by the nationals. However, many newly independent countries did not have universities to provide training to high-level professional staff needed to replace the expatriates and hence these countries relied on sending persons abroad for training (Kidd, 1991). The establishment of national universities in many instances helped train nationals and indigenize development.

The indigenization of educational development implied indigenizing teaching staff, curriculum, and language at the different levels of education. The priority for the national governments was to train nationals to teach in schools, especially primary schools. Although this sector too was depended on expatriates, the domestic higher education institutions over a period of time succeeded in producing trained nationals and helped replacing expatriates in the teaching professions. At present, the teaching staff at all levels of education in most of the countries in Africa is dominated by nationals.

The state and public sector institutions were central to the development strategy of the newly independent countries in Africa. This model was replicated in education. Higher education was provided through public universities. The decades of 1960s and 1970s saw the establishment of new universities in African countries. Further, public universities in these countries also “symbolized national pride and self-respect” (Coleman and Court, 1993) and self reliance. It can be seen that, under this frame of analysis, the expansion of higher education served both political and economic aspirations of the newly independent governments. Hence, the governments were willing to allocate resources and invest in higher education.

The post-independence period saw a positive political attitude and a favorable resource allocation policy towards higher education. It seems that the higher education sector was a beneficiary of the compulsions of replacing the expatriates who occupied more than 60 per cent of the jobs requiring university-level qualification. In the decade following independence, the allocations to higher education averaged around 19 per cent of the education budget even when enrolment in higher education was less than one per cent of the relevant age-group making unit costs very high (Hinchliffe, 1987). During this period higher education remained an elite sector with limited access but with liberal public funding support.

African universities, like in other regions, were shaped after institutions of higher education operating in the respective colonial powers. Universities in Francophone Africa were shaped after French universities and those in Anglophone countries were shaped after British and American universities. The universities had limited access; a foreign language was the medium of instruction; and these institutions enjoyed limited autonomy (Teferra and Altbach, 2003). In many instances, political leaders (Presidents and Prime Ministers) became university chancellors and patrons, thus enjoying considerable power and influential authority over university affairs and limiting the autonomy of these institutions.

International agencies also helped shape the development of higher education in Africa. UNESCO sponsored the first Africa-wide conference on higher education in Tananarive in 1962 which paved the way for the creation of the Association of African Universities. The heads of universities who participated in the Tananarive conference met in Khartoum to form AAU, which was formally inaugurated in Rabat, Morocco, in 1967. AAU organized regular



meetings to provide the vision and framework for the development of higher education in Africa.

During this period the major sources of funding came from the government and in that sense this was a period of expansion of higher education through highly subsidized public institutions. The other source of financing higher education was external funding. The World Bank remained the single largest source of external funding for higher education in Africa (Habte, 1989). Many private foundations made substantial contributions to developing institutional capacity to carry out research and training in Africa. The Rockefeller Foundation concentrated its efforts in certain selected universities and also provided fellowships and grants for study abroad programmes, especially for the Master's and doctoral level, appointed visiting staff, and provided research grants to promote local research (World Bank, 1988). The Carnegie Corporation, the Kellogg Foundation, and the Ford Foundation, etc., were other notable private agencies.

These trends in external funding continued even in the new millennium. In 2000, a consortium of four US philanthropic foundations began an initial five-year programme to assist selected universities in some of the African countries. Higher education institutions in Africa also received support from governments and agencies from many European countries such as Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK, etc. Recent trends in external funding of higher education show that a major share of higher education aid is indirect and its share increased from 62 per cent in 2002 to around 90 per cent in 2006 (Varghese, 2010).

This state-funded, heavily subsidized model of higher education did not last long. In the 1980s, the share of higher education in state funding declined, as did external funding of higher education. As a result, many public universities have fallen into a 'severe state of disrepair'. Deterioration in physical facilities and academic provisions combined with faculty flight due to low pay scales and non-payment of salaries led to a sharp decline in the quality of higher education imparted in the universities (Mamdani, 1993; Mwiria, 1992; Teferra, 1997; Adeyemi, 2000). The net migration from SSA doubled from 0.57 million in 1995 to 1.07 million in 2005 and an estimated one third of this number were university graduates (World Bank, 2009).

These developments, no doubt, have contributed to a deterioration of teaching standards, a depletion of research capacities, and an erosion of national analytical capacities to provide policy support (Saint, 1992; Otieno, 2003). The major question in the 1990s was on designing survival strategies to reconstruct and revive higher education in the region (World Bank, 1988; Eisemon, 1989). The educational reforms in Africa in the 1990s were centred on the issue of financing alternatives to promote an expanding system of higher education and managing the universities more efficiently and effectively (Sanyal, 1995).

#### **4. Higher education reforms and expansion of higher education in Africa**

The revival of higher education needed reforms to mobilize resources and the restructuring of study programmes, governance and management to better align with markets. The economic reforms of the 1990s clearly indicated a move away from the state to market. Market-friendly reforms became common in economic sectors and their influence was also reflected in education, especially higher education. However, the pressure to reform higher education was

worldwide as the knowledge-based economy becomes the motor of economic growth and competitiveness (Fielden, 2008).

The global environment of positive orientation towards market-friendly reforms in higher education no doubt encouraged and promoted similar reforms in Africa. However, the countries in Africa had their own compulsions. First, the political changes and a return to democracy in several countries of Africa in the 1990s were important influencing factors to democratize higher education and improve access to it (Moja, 2004; Cloete and Bunting, 2002). Second, the fiscal crisis and inability of the state to fund an expanding system of higher education forced countries to evolve alternative strategies for the financing of higher education (Kinyanjui, 1994; Court, 1999; Chuta, 1998). Positive economic growth accompanied by improved household income and better employment prospects increased the capacity and willingness of households to invest in quality higher education for their wards and it provided a fertile ground for market operations in higher education.

The pressure to reform came from three sets of actors – the state and the corporate sector for improving economic growth and competitiveness, the employers looking for relevant skills, and the households for their willingness to pay. The reforms are also an effort to satisfy these actors and respond to their concerns. There are core concerns, common across reforms in several countries, although their relative importance varies depending on the level of development of the country (Varghese, 2012). Most reforms express: a) a concern for knowledge production and use of knowledge in production. The pre-occupation in many countries with university ranking and the establishment of world class universities (Salmi, 2009) stems from this premise; b) a concern for realigning higher education to the employment market (Al-Samarrai, 2003; UNESCO, 2012); and c) a concern for expanding higher education.

Although, all three concerns were relevant for higher education reforms in Africa, the immediate concern was to expand the system since the region not only had the lowest GERs but also that enrolments were stagnating, if not declining, in many instances. Certain aspects of globalization, namely the encouraging of market principles in all sectors including education, helped devising strategies for the expansion of the system relying on non-state resources. It is argued that the impact of globalization on higher education in Africa is reflected in terms of six Cs: Corporatization of management; collectivization of access; commercialization of learning; commodification of knowledge; computerization of education, and; connectivity of institutions (Zelena, 2004).

It can be argued that several reforms in higher education in Africa may be stemming more from the compulsions of the state to expand higher education and the fiscal constraints of the state to finance the expansion. The market-friendly reforms were an integral part of this package of reforms in the context of the globalization process. From this perspective, the reforms implemented in African universities can be broadly categorized into: a) privatization of public institutions; and b) promotion of private institutions (Varghese, 2006).

The privatization measures imply that, while the institutions remain in public ownership, its operations are guided by market principles. Some of the specific privatization measures adopted by countries and universities in Africa include the university enterprise scheme (UNES) and parallel programmes of the University of Nairobi (Kiamba, 2004), the dual track

admission policy – with sponsored and private students – in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mauritius, Uganda (Makerere University) (Mamdani, 2008; Court, 1999) – the dual track – residential and non-residential programmes in Malawi, the institutional transformation programmes, cost-sharing, and revenue diversification strategies of the University of Dar-es-Salaam (Ishengoma, 2004), dual track systems in Zambia and the cost-recovery measures adopted widely through the abolition of subsidies, the pricing of services, and the introduction of tuition fees and student loan programmes in several countries in the region (Johnstone, 2003; Oketch, 2003; World Bank, 2010).

The other measure, namely the establishment of private higher education institutions, got momentum from the late 1990s onwards (Oketch, 2003). There are private universities, private colleges, and non-university institutions in Africa. Private universities offer courses leading to a degree, while others offer short-duration courses leading to a certificate or diploma. In many African countries it is the private higher education segment that is expanding very rapidly (Levy, 2006; Mabizela, 2002; Taver, 2003; Varghese, 2006) and the number of private universities outnumbers the public universities in many countries in Africa. It has been noticed recently that the non-university private institutions are expanding faster than the university sector.

Some of the private higher education institutions are owned by nationals while others are owned by transnational corporations and institutions. Some foreign universities operate branch campuses in many African countries. Similarly, a number of private institutions are operated by religious – notably Christian and Islamic – organizations. Many of the private institutions are offering courses in a limited number of subject areas (Varghese, 2006). They very often offer market-friendly courses in the areas of business administration, computer sciences, accounting, marketing, economics, communication, etc., and they rarely offer courses in sciences, medical and engineering subject areas which require heavy investment in laboratories and equipment (ADEA-WGHE-AAU-IIEP, 2009).

Another major global reform which affected all regions was the effort towards the harmonization of a degree structure, student assessment, and external quality assurance mechanisms to drive the system towards better convergences and integration. Although, these efforts to harmonize higher education very often stem from the Bologna Process, the harmonization efforts in Africa started in the 1980s. UNESCO, in its Arusha convention of 1981, initially mooted the idea of developing a structure to ensure comparability of diplomas awarded by universities in the region. Although all countries have not yet ratified the convention conclusions, the African Union Convention came up with a plan of action for the harmonization and mutual recognition of degrees, contents and quality of education offered in institutions of different countries in the region (Oyewole, 2013). All the reforms discussed above contributed in one form or another to the expansion of higher education in Africa.

### ***Expansion of higher education in Africa***

The enrolment ratios at various levels of education (*Table 1*) indicate that the disparities between global averages and the average for Africa are narrowing down. In 2010, the GER between the world average and Africa was almost equal at the primary level, less than two times at secondary level, and more than four times at the higher education level. It can be seen from *Table 1* that the educational distances are positively associated with the levels of

education and the largest disparities in enrolment between regions continue to be in higher education.

Africa has travelled a long way from graduating two students for the first time in an African Institution (Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone) in 1879 to enrolling 5.2 million students in institutions of higher education in 2010. The GER in Sub-Saharan African countries is low at seven per cent and is the lowest for any region in the world. In 2010, the GER is as low as one per cent in Malawi, two per cent in Eritrea, Niger Tanzania, etc. Mauritius with a GER of 25 per cent ranks highest among the countries in Africa (*Table 2*). It can be noticed that the largest gains in enrolment ratios were made over the last decade. This is also partly due to the expansion of higher education through the private institutions or through private student schemes in the public institutions.

What is striking in the case of countries in Africa is the trends in growth in enrolment in the past four decades (*Table 2*). It shows that the system of higher education was growing very slowly or stagnating till the beginning of this century and GER started improving rather fast thereafter. Between 2000 and 2010 GER doubled in many countries, increased by three or four times in some other countries.

It can be argued that the reform measures discussed in the previous section helped expand the sector. This is confirmed by the fact that expansion takes place more in the private segment of the public institutions (fee-paying students) and in private institutions of higher education. At present, many countries in Africa maintain high growth rates of enrolment in higher education (Mohammedbhai, 2008) and this region maintains the highest rates of growth in enrolment in institutions of higher education in this century.

**Table 1: Gross enrolment ratios (GER) 1970-2010**

		Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
		Both sexes	Both sexes	Both sexes
<b>World total</b>	<b>1970</b>	89.9	36.4	9.2
	<b>1980</b>	95.9	46.5	12.3
	<b>1990</b>	99.2	51.8	13.8
	<b>1997</b>	101.8	60.1	17.4
	<b>2010</b>	106.0	70.0	29.0
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	<b>1970</b>	52.5	7.1	0.8
	<b>1980</b>	79.5	17.5	1.7
	<b>1990</b>	74.8	22.4	3.0
	<b>1997</b>	76.8	26.2	3.90
	<b>2010</b>	101.0	40.0	7.0

*Sources:*

a) 1970-1990: Estimates provided in UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999

b) 2000 and 2010: Estimates compiled from UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999 and online statistical database from UIS ([www.uis.unesco.org](http://www.uis.unesco.org)) that provided values for 2000.

**Table 2: Gross enrolment ratio for higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa 1970-2010**

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
<b>Angola</b>	0.5	0.4	0.8	1.0	4.0
<b>Benin</b>	0.1	1.4	2.7	4.0	11.0
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	0.0	0.3	0.7	...	4.0
<b>Burundi</b>	0.1	0.5	0.7	1.0	3.0
<b>Cameroon</b>	0.5	1.7	3.3	5.0	11.0
<b>Central African Republic</b>	0.1	0.9	1.5	2.0	3.0
<b>Congo</b>	1.7	5.1	5.4	5.0	6.0
<b>Democratic Rep. of the Congo</b>	0.7	1.2	2.4	1.0	6.0
<b>Equatorial Guinea</b>	...	5.6	1.8	3.0	2.0
<b>Ethiopia</b>	0.2	0.4	0.8	2.0	5.0
<b>Ghana</b>	0.7	1.6	1.4	3.0	12.0
<b>Kenya</b>	0.8	0.9	1.6	3.0	4.0
<b>Madagascar</b>	1.0	2.6	3.0	2.0	4.0
<b>Malawi</b>	0.4	0.5	0.6	...	1.0
<b>Mali</b>	0.2	0.8	0.6	2.0	6.0
<b>Mauritius</b>	2.5	1.0	3.5	11.0	25.0
<b>Namibia</b>	...	...	3.3	6.0	9.0
<b>Niger</b>	...	0.3	0.7	1.0	2.0
<b>Rwanda</b>	0.2	0.3	0.6	2.0	5.0
<b>Senegal</b>	1.4	2.7	3.0	4.0	8.0
<b>Uganda</b>	0.5	0.5	1.2	3.0	4.0
<b>United Republic of Tanzania</b>	0.2	0.3	0.3	1.0	2.0
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	...	1.3	5.2	4.0	6.0

Sources:

a) 1970-1990: Estimates provided in UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999

b) 2000 and 2010: Estimates compiled from UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1999 and online statistical database from UIS ([www.uis.unesco.org](http://www.uis.unesco.org)) that provided values for 2000.

## 5. Nature of higher education reforms in the case study countries

Traditionally, higher education in Africa used to be offered by the public institutions funded, managed and controlled by the government. With shrinking public resources, the concept of “new public management” crept into the higher education sector. Many governments transferred part of their authority and responsibility to institutions which became more autonomous and market-friendly in their operations. The institutions have introduced several reform measures which have resulted in substantial changes in the way their activities are organized and managed. The present research study is an effort to analyze these reforms in selected countries and understand their effects on the governance of higher education at the institutional and national level.

The case studies centered on two major research questions:

- a) What were the new reform measures related to the governance and management of higher education in the recent past?
- b) What are the effects of these reform measures on institutional governance and management?

The term *governance* is used to imply structures and processes of decision-making. It may entail the creation of new structures. Structure mainly concern offices, positions, and formal roles within an organization. The term *management* is used to imply the implementation of decisions which involves specification criteria for the allocation of resources to various activities, the allotment of tasks to various groups, and the evaluation of performance. The term *effect* implies the changes resulting from the reform measure.

This research study tried to analyze the similarities and differences of governance reforms and steering policies across countries belonging to varying developmental contexts. The comparative approach provided an analytical framework for examining the trends with flexibility to contextualize the evidence generated. The study relied on secondary and primary data sources. The secondary sources of data were relied on to analyze the provision and progress of higher education and policies followed in the country. The information generated from the primary sources included information collected through questionnaires administered to different segments of the university community, and through interviews with persons holding positions of responsibility both at the institutional and national levels.

The countries for the case studies or in-depth analysis were selected from those sets of countries where reforms and new steering policies have been introduced. However, to provide a comparative picture and to ascertain the possibilities of generalizing the findings, countries belonging to different development contexts were selected.

The thus selected countries for case studies are: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. These countries vary in terms of economic and higher education development and thus provide a continuum from a low income country (Ethiopia) to a relatively high income country (South Africa). All of these countries have several public universities which necessitate one set of reforms at the national level to regulate several public institutions operating within the country.

The countries were identified in such a way that the variations are substantial, and taken together they provide a development continuum. We identified four variables to select the countries. These variables are: i) human development Index (HDI) of 2011; ii) NER primary 2009; iii) NER secondary 2009; and iv) GER higher education 2010. Based on these indicators, Ethiopia seems to be the least developed, followed by Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and South Africa which is the most developed (*Table 3*).

**Table 3: Characteristics of selected countries**

	HD1 2011	NER primary 2009	NER Secondary 2009	GER Higher education 2010
Ethiopia	0.363	84.0	34.0	4.0
Nigeria	0.459	59.0	30.0	10.0*
Kenya	0.509	83.0	59.0	4.0
Ghana	0.541	76.0	57.0	9.0
South Africa	0.619	90.0	94.0	15.0*
World Average		90.0	68.0	29.0

Note: \* 2006

Sources: i) UNDP 2011 for HDI; ii) UIS 2011 for Enrolment data.

### *The nature of reforms in the selected countries*

The specific reform measures studied were identified by the national research teams from the respective countries. The research teams from each of these countries discussed and finalized the specific reforms studied in a workshop in Addis Ababa. The thus selected reforms for detailed analysis are below.

In Ethiopia, the higher education proclamation of 2003 (No.351/2003) grants autonomy to higher education institutions. Autonomy is granted in the administration of personnel, finances, internal organization, and in establishing linkages with internal and international organizations, etc. The reforms also led to the introduction of a block grant system, enrolment-based budgeting, and the introduction of cost-sharing.

The reform of 2003 envisages that all public higher education institutions are to be established with autonomy and accountability. It also defined the governance structure to constitute an independent board of governors, the senate (constituting academic deans and directors with a few elected academics), academic commissions and department assemblies. Changes in the higher education governance system included a shift from the collegial model to the managerial model, the creation of buffer organizations and the introduction of an outcome-based strategic plan (BPR).

The proclamation also allowed establishment of private higher education institutions in Ethiopia. Cost sharing became common practice in many universities and introduced the block grant system to universities, established a Council of universities; established buffer organizations such as the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance Agency (HERQAA) and the Higher Education Strategy Center (HESC). While the former sets standards and quality, the latter body was entrusted with the authority of providing, designing, and developing strategic directions of higher education with the aim of ensuring relevance. Before 2003, all higher education institutions, except Addis Ababa University and Haramaya University, were governed directly by a department in the MOE. Today each university has its own board established by the government proclamation making it autonomous from the direct interference of the Ministry of Education.

In Nigeria, following the Magna Charta Universitatum (1998), public universities have become autonomous, free from over-regulation by the government, and subject to accountability measures. Autonomy gave the universities the freedom to appoint key officers, determine the conditions of service of their staff, control student admissions and academic

curricula, and control their finances. The autonomy measures included freedom to introduce courses and generate income, and the introduction of institutional evaluation and staff appraisals, etc.

In Nigeria, the federal government, in its efforts to democratize public educational institutions, amended the law in 2003 to provide improved autonomy for the university system. The Act provided them freedom to govern and regulate themselves as independent legal entities without interference from the government and its agencies. Prior to the reforms, the appointment and removal of VC was done by the President of the country. At present, the Council appoints the Vice-Chancellor from among a list of three candidates recommended to it. The buffer institutions include the National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).

In Kenya, as a follow-up to the public service reforms of the 1990s, the government introduced results-based management (RBM) as the basic approach to governance and management of public institutions. The performance contract (PC) was one of the important elements in this reform. A PC is a negotiated agreement between the government and public institutions focusing on their performance and outcomes. The PC provides the managerial and operational autonomy to public institutions. The PC is based on performance criteria or the tenets of good corporate governance, and each performance criteria has selected performance indicators to measure the progress made. In a typical PC, performance indicators and targets for each criterion are represented in a matrix and form a part of the contract.

In Ghana, the internal reforms initiated in the University of Ghana in 2007 led to the review and replacement of the Act of Parliament and the statutes guiding the internal organization and operations of public universities in the country. The reforms included new institutional evaluation procedures, the merging of courses, the introduction of a credit system, cost-recovery measures and new funding formula, the creation of new governing bodies and buffer institutions, new staff recruitment procedures, and the transition of staff from civil service to university employees. The Ghana study explored the interface between the internal reforms of 2007 and the national legal and educational framework. It examined the degree to which recent reforms initiated by the university might have achieved the desired results and also the possible national impact such reforms implemented in the University of Ghana have had on the governance of systems of tertiary institutions nationally and internally.

In South Africa, the reforms of 2003 in planning and funding helped steer the higher education system to respond to national development needs. The new funding/planning framework replaced the South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) funding model. The new framework indicated the mechanisms for the distribution of government grants to individual institutions, in accordance with: a) national planning and policy priorities; b) the quantum of funds made available in the national higher education budget; and c) the approved plans of individual institutions. The new framework has had considerable influence in steering institutions of higher education to achieve the intended national goals. A basic feature of the New Funding Framework was that it linked the resource allocations to national planning and institutional plans. The planning/funding link made the framework essentially a goal-directed mechanism for the distribution of government grants to institutions in accordance with national policy and planning priorities.



It can be seen from the various reform measures implemented in the countries selected that all reforms in these countries gave more operational freedom to institutions of higher education on the one hand, while they enhanced the accountability measures on the other hand. Therefore, although all case studies are not focusing on the issue of autonomy, it becomes an underlying framework to implement several reforms which they initiated.

The reforms and their effects were studied in the areas of changes in governance and management, academic domains, financial issues, staff management, monitoring and evaluation procedures, etc.

## **6. Did the reforms effect changes in governance and management of higher education?**

The reforms result in the way governance and management of institutions of higher education are carried out. The following paragraphs try to capture some of these changes in certain specific selected areas.

### *New governance structures*

One of the visible effects of the reforms was the creation of new structures. For example, as an initial step to implement autonomy and other reforms, Addis Ababa University (AAU) created a new executive office – the Reform Office. The new governance structure also included five offices of the vice presidency – vice president for academic, for business and development, for research and postgraduate programmes, for communication and external relations, and for health and the Black Lion Hospital. Six new senior academic offices were also created under these vice presidents. Changes in the higher education governance system included a shift from the collegial model to the managerial model, the creation of buffer organizations, and the introduction of an outcome-based strategic plan (BPR).

The existing faculties and schools in AAU were clustered into seven colleges headed by the directors in addition to the faculty or school deans. The directors now report directly to the university president while the deans report to the vice presidents. The seven colleges became more autonomous in financial matters, in executing and supervising their activities. Further, the present autonomy gave each college the freedom to use its budget without the approval of officials in the central administration of the university.

In Nigeria, autonomy led to the formation of councils which will serve for a four-year term. Institutional governance and structure were affected and the process of the selection of vice chancellor, deans, and heads of departments were changed. The National University Commission (NUC) became involved in the management of institutional finances; involved in the selection of institutional leaders and members of governing councils, approving new curriculum, and in physical development plans for each university. Consequently, as university autonomy was compromised, academic staff and student organizations voiced public criticism to press for institutional autonomy.

In Kenya, at the national level, a Permanent Secretary position was created in the Office of the Prime Minister to be in charge of performance contracting. In the Ministry of Higher Education, two officers were designated to be in charge of performance contracting. At the university level: a) an ad-hoc committee chaired by the DVC (administration and finance) was created and mandated to develop university corporate strategic plans and performance

contracts with the ministry; b) a full-time PC secretariat was created under the Office of the DVC (Administration and Finance), with some of the colleges; c) an ad-hoc ISO Steering Committee under the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, with ad-hoc committees at the college level; d) DVC in charge of research, production and extension; and e) DVC in charge of student affairs to improve service delivery.

With the introduction of PCs, institutional governance and management has been shared among the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, the University Councils, and the performance contracting secretariat. The buffer institution, (Commission for Higher Education, CHE) did not have much role. However, the new Universities Act, 2012 gives the Commission for University Education (CUE) a supervisory role over all universities.

In Ghana, the university constituted an expanded council with a number of committees and sub-committees in specific areas. The Academic Board has also been reconstituted with new committees for the: i) Business and Executive Committee; ii) Academic Quality, Curriculum, and Staff Development Committee; iii) Office of Research, Innovation and Development Advisory Board; and iv) Office of Research, Innovation and Development Management Board. The new structure also included a new Finance Director and a Director for Audit.

### *Management processes*

The principles guiding the governance reforms of Addis Ababa university were: i) vertical decentralization; ii) horizontal decentralization; iii) self-governance; iv) inclusiveness; v) transparency; and vi) recourse. These principles helped extend autonomy by creating decision-making bodies and committees at all levels. The Addis Ababa University introduced what is called the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) approach to manage the university affairs. The introduction of BPR was aimed at optimizing efficiency in service delivery and improving the core work processes. One of the major issues in AAU is the large number of support staff. It has 60 per cent more support staff (5000 support staff) against 40 per cent (2000 academic staff) that still continues although the expectation was to trim their size. The reforms could do very little to alter this ratio between support staff and academic staff.

In Nigeria, autonomy led to a more democratic process whereby the Heads of Department and Deans are elected. It also led to the introduction of a committee system with an established due process and procedure of doing things and which reduced the arbitrariness in decision making. In the area of staff management, the selection procedures were changed. The new appointment procedure includes an inter-departmental interview panel, and written examination and presentation of seminar by the applicants. The university also established promotion committees at the departmental levels.

In Nairobi University, the management style has become more transparent, accountable, participatory and inclusive with better scope for the unions to negotiate for better terms. Kenya introduced competitive hiring of senior managers. For example, the Secretary in charge of higher education is hired competitively. Similarly, staff recruitment and promotions are based on the evaluation of their performance. The staff in ministries need to attend specific courses at the Kenya Institute of Management before they may be considered for promotion. The competitive hiring of all top managers helped minimize political interference.

### *Academic programmes*

Addis Ababa University established multidisciplinary centers, expanded and diversified programmes of study, and strengthened science and technology programmes. Fifteen new centers of excellence and institutes were established to provide multi-disciplinary competency-based training and education. The university also introduced modularization of curriculum and courses to enhance ‘customer satisfaction’.

Due to performance contracts, the University of Nairobi could introduce many academic programmes, increased student enrolment at all levels including doctoral studies, and increased the number of publication of papers and participation of academic staff in conferences. In Nigeria, autonomy enabled more freedom to develop innovative curriculum. Academic programmes developed in the university are more responsive to societal needs. Classroom interactions and research efforts are patterned after the needs of the society and also helped develop new market-driven and employment-oriented courses.

The University of Ghana reviewed the course credit and semester system and introduced a four-year degree structure; introduced a new grading system to reflect the course-credit/semester system. The Departments of Classical History and Civilization and the Department of Philosophy turned into the Department of Philosophy & Classics to ensure the better use of resources. The university established faculty-based research review committees and mechanisms for the periodic review of departmental curriculum. To improve the quality, it was decided that a doctorate degree (PhD) should be the minimum qualification for appointment as an academic staff in Ghana University.

### *Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms*

In Kenya, the monitoring and evaluation procedures were strengthened. They introduced a quarterly monitoring and semi-annual and annual evaluations of the results. However, there is criticism that the department in charge of Performance Contracting very often did not find funds and time to analyze the quarterly reports from the institutions or check the actual performance on the ground. Such defaults did not happen in universities such as the University of Nairobi. The systematic monitoring seems to have improved both performance at the individual and university levels.

In Nigeria, changes were introduced to ensure staff accountability/evaluation procedures. The university established a quality assurance unit in the university, and introduced team teaching and mechanisms to reward good performance and sanction poor performance.

In South Africa, performance-based funding framework and the need for adherence to the agreed enrolment and output targets required universities to put in place closer monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the institution delivers on the agreed targets. The reforms also resulted in the establishment of the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) as a planning tool to monitor enrolments and as a mechanism for the distribution of subsidies to institutions. As such, institutions were forced to use software and planning tools that were the same as those used by the department to facilitate the easy compliance and monitoring of plans. The major effect of the use of HEMIS was that it brought about stability and predictability in the system.

One of the features of the funding framework is that it was performance-based as it rewarded institutions according to the quantity of their outputs. The linking of the distribution of funds to research outputs made institutions start competing for research funds, which made the system become more competitive. According to the HEMIS (2012) data, there has been a 52 per cent increase in research publication units between 2002 and 2011, with a significant increase in the output of historically black institutions.

### ***Financial management***

In Ethiopia, the line-item budget-based resource transfer was replaced by the block grants system. This has many implications for the governance and management of universities. In Kenya, the reforms helped introduce an automated accounting system, zero-based budgeting, and better financial management. Some of these efforts led to the generation of operational surplus in the university. Prior to the reforms on university autonomy, the acute shortage of funds almost led to the total collapse of the university system leading to a decline in research output and quality of teaching in AAU.

In Nigeria, the university diversified the sources of funding through competitive research funding, a special project fund, tuition fees, income generating ventures, etc. The university established direct collaborations with international organizations and grant partners. The changes introduced in the area of budget and financial management include the establishment of a department finance committee at the department level and also the use of a Local Purchasing Order (LPO) for the purchase of important items. The autonomy also increased the income-generating activities of the departments and faculties, although the actual income generated was limited.

In Ghana, the government initiative of National Institutional Renewal Programme expected required public universities to generate 30 per cent of their budgetary requirements. The university has been generating around 25 per cent of its income from student fees, from the privatization of some services, such as guest house services and land leases for private hostels, and from market-driven courses. The university has an Investment Committee that oversees its investment portfolio. A limited liability company, the University of Ghana Enterprises Limited (UGEL) has been set up to manage income-generating activities. The university implemented an Integrated Tertiary Software (ITS) for handling many of the university's administrative functions such as its central financial functions, student records requirements, human resource management, and the payroll system. This has allowed the institution to reduce the number of bank accounts managed in the university and made financial reporting easier.

The discussions above indicate that the reforms effected changes in crucial areas of governance and management of the universities. However, the more difficult question is whether or not these reforms improved the higher education system as a whole.

## **7. Did governance reforms improve higher education?**

In Ethiopia, the senior management feel that the changes brought about by granting autonomy point in the positive direction in many respects. With autonomy the financial procedures have changed. The allocations from government have come directly from the Ministry of Economic Development and Finance (MOFED) to the university, and that the government control has

reduced. The involvement of the government on AAU affairs is merely supervisory and not administrative or managerial. However, whether these changes have improved the financial situation or managerial efficiency is not very clear.

There is criticism raised against the BPR which was one of the basic elements of the reform. Many in the university community feel that the reforms based on BPR led to a paradigm shift from academic competence to operational competence, leading to the vocationalization of curriculum. The administrative staff, too, expressed a very negative opinion about BPR and its implementation. Even those who supported the BPR felt that it was a badly implemented idea. In other words, the autonomy gained by the university may not have contributed to improve the institutional effectiveness, as was expected by the reform. It needs to be mentioned that an assessment of reforms in AAU in 2011 by the Reform Council was very critical of the changes and their implementation.

In Kenya, the performance contracting led to increased autonomy of public universities and brought about a greater feeling of partnership between universities and the government on a more equal footing. The PC helped reorganize internal operations and its success made decision-making shorter and more efficient. The PC increased accountability measures and the measures helped in ensuring increased output by the university. Research productivity increased, leading to an improvement in the national ranking of the university. In fact, the University of Nairobi moved from 21<sup>st</sup> place in national ranking in 2005 to 1<sup>st</sup> place in 2011. This is a very positive development.

The reforms in Ghana helped promote a greater sense of responsibility among staff and students and stimulated intellectualism. It also strengthened the decision-making process at the faculty level, and enhanced teaching and research. The reforms were beneficial particularly to the reorganization of the collegiate system. The reforms also brought about greater clarity of the institutional direction with regard to ideals to reach the university goals and constraints on their effectiveness among the administrators.

The reforms in South Africa brought stability and predictability in the higher education system. The new funding and enrolment planning policies helped the government to shape and size the system of higher education in the country. Institutions such as the University of Pretoria adopted the national enrolment planning and funding frameworks to plan and manage their operations at the institutional level. Over the past decade, the disadvantaged groups were beneficiaries of the expansion of university institutions. For example, the review of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) which indicated that, between 1999 and 2009, the NSFAS had been able to provide financial aid to 650,000 (disadvantaged) students.

Unfortunately, while the objective of access was achieved, there is less agreement on whether or not success was realized. Between 2000 and 2010, a large number of NSFAS-sponsored students failed to graduate (the graduation rate among them was only 19 per cent). And more importantly, nearly 48 per cent of the students dropped out. It seems the race-wise enrolment rates did not change substantially while this programme was being implemented.

Closer examination of the effects of the reforms indicate that they were, in most instances, helpful to improve the governance and operational efficiency of the institutions. The reforms also helped to reduce reliance on the state for funds. However, there is less agreement on the effects of the reforms on the quality of services provided and on equity in access and success.

For example, as to the PCs in Kenya, despite their impressive success in improving efficiency in operation through improved accountability measures, the effect of PCs in improving quality of services is not certain. In Ethiopia, the success of reforms in general is still debatable. It seems the university community was not in favor of BPR and its opposition to BPR is also reflected in terms of their assessment on the benefits of autonomy. In Nigeria, too, the message is not clear whether or not autonomy led to improving the quality of services provided by the university and equity in access.

## **8. Toward some generalizations**

The evolution of universities and institutions of higher education in Africa shows that, as part of the general development strategy where the state and the public sector institutions played a dominant role, public institutions were in the dominant position, if not enjoying a monopoly, in the provision of higher education in African countries. The public universities, public funding, and government control characterized the governance and management of higher education during the period following independence.

While Africanization was an important consideration, the inherited colonial structures reproduced a sense of elitism and elites in the respective countries. Limited access to universities, the medium of instruction in a foreign language, etc., advanced this process of elite formation. As noted by Moja (2004), ‘unfortunately, the reformed post-colonial universities continued to serve the same purpose as the colonial universities by producing the elite for the bureaucracy and the private sector’ (p.26).

The reforms studied, however, show how the higher education context has changed in Africa. Although the reform measures studied varied among countries, a closer examination of the reforms will reveal that there is one underlying feature which unites all these measures, namely their accent on institutional initiatives and autonomy. All these reforms provided the institutions enough scope to be autonomous in their operations and is an important change in the governance of institutions of higher education in Africa. Similar trends are noticed in other IIEP studies in Asia (Varghese and Martin, 2013). Similarly, it is found in another IIEP study that the governance reforms led to reinforcement of autonomy and a collegial form of management in Francophone countries in Africa (Martin, 2013).

The granting of autonomy may also be due to the fact that the state reached the realization that the resource requirements for an expanding higher education sector cannot be met by the public exchequer. To accommodate the growing social demand for higher education, there was a compulsion to diversify provision, proliferate providers, and multiply the modes of delivery. This necessitated diversified sources of funding rather than a total reliance on government funding. The market-friendly reforms helped to diversify the sources of funding, while at the same time warranted changes in the governance structures to accommodate more and more market signals. With the reduced role of the state in financing, the higher education system in many countries in Africa moved from a ‘state-controlled’ to a ‘state-supervision’ model of governance in higher education.

As the case studies indicated, the reforms gave institutions autonomy which permitted them to set priorities, develop strategies and study programmes, mobilize resources, etc. The reforms also resulted in the creation of new structures of governance. Most institutions created governing bodies to take decisions, develop their own staff recruitment and management

policies, develop new study programmes and courses, defined institutional strategies, and regulated student admissions. Institutions diversified sources of funding, mobilized resources, and allocated them internally based on commonly accepted and objectively verifiable criteria (Varghese, 2013). The decision-making process became more transparent.

Many countries created buffer organizations and performance monitoring, and the establishment of external quality assurance mechanisms became common. The buffer bodies such as the National Council of Higher Education or University Grants Commission/Committee or their equivalents have become common in Anglophone countries. These buffer institutions provided policy support, ensured quality control, regulated the growth of private institutions and implemented many accountability measures to ensure improved performance. Some of them have played a very important role in regulating the system. For example, interventions by the National University Commission (NUC) in Nigeria helped close down many of the ‘degree mills’ in the country (Okebukola, 2008).

New legislations defining institutional governance structures were introduced in many countries reflecting the changing context of higher education (Saint, 2009). Following the legislative changes, the heads of states were replaced as chancellors of universities. Another important step in governance reforms was the process of the constitution of Governing Boards/Councils. In countries such as Kenya, there are separate management Boards at the institutional and school levels. The deans in several countries are elected by the academic staff. This, in a sense, has increased participation in decision making.

The reforms also indicated that institutions are increasingly accountable for their performance in meeting societal expectations, realizing targets set, maintaining excellence and high quality, and using public funds responsibly. The strategic plans, performance indicators, regular monitoring and evaluation procedures all indicate increased accountability measures. One of the most commonly found structures is external quality assurance mechanisms to ensure the quality of the outcomes (Martin and Antony, 2007).

Did the government influence on decision making decline due to the reforms and autonomy? Government influence is evident in many instances of the Board member appointments. In some cases, such as in Ghana, the Board appoints its own members. In some other countries, they are appointed in consultation with the government or directly by the Head of State. In some countries, some of the members are appointed by the Board, while the remaining are appointed by the government. Some of the reforms, especially in South Africa, also indicated that the reforms helped to align institutional activities to achieve national objectives.

It may not be correct to take the position that all government interventions are bad and that all market processes are good. Even when institutions are autonomous, the governments do play a role – an important role – to ensure that the system is functioning well. The state provides a framework for all institutions (including private institutions) to operate, and it insists on accountability measures to ensure the operations in the sector help achieve the national objectives.

It is true that the autonomy and market processes – cost recovery, income-generating activities, etc. – helped many universities survive the financial difficulties. Further, these reforms also contributed to improved performance, increased research output, arresting staff depletion, improved market relevance of its courses, and reduced reliance on state funds. The

privatization measures and private institutions have helped expand the system. However, access to higher education under these arrangements is on a capacity to pay principle. Implications of such a policy for long-term equity consideration is not clear, even when expansion of the sector is welcomed.

The studies showed that government intervention in the form of regulations may be necessary to enforce accountability measures and to ensure a more balanced growth of higher education in the region. The regulations may help target subsidies and to ensure equity. In other words, the case studies show an important role of the state in the higher education development, even when its capacity to finance an expanding higher education system is weak. It may not be necessarily correct to argue that the state is marginalized in the process of market orientation in higher education. The role of the state, no doubt, is redefined more in terms of developing a framework for operation and regulating the system than in terms of financing, managing and controlling institutions of higher education.

**Note :** All references to case study countries, unless otherwise mentioned, are from the following IIEP sponsored research reports prepared by the national research teams:

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