

Knowledge and Change in African Universities

Volume 2 – Re-Imagining the Terrain

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While African universities retain their core function as primary institutions for advancement of knowledge, they have undergone fundamental changes in this regard. These changes have been triggered by a multiplicity of factors, including the need to address past economic and social imbalances, higher education expansion alongside demographic and economic growth concerns, and student throughput and success with the realization that greater participation has not meant greater equity. Constraining these changes is largely the failure to recognize the encroachment of the profit motive into the academy, or a shift from a public good knowledge/learning regime to a neo-liberal knowledge/learning regime. Neo-liberalism, with its emphasis on the *economic* and market function of the university, rather than the *social* function, is increasingly destabilizing higher education particularly in the domain of knowledge, making it increasingly unresponsive to local social and cultural needs. Corporate organizational practices, commodification and commercialization of knowledge, dictated by market ethics, dominate university practices in Africa with negative impact on professional values, norms and beliefs. Under such circumstances, African humanist progressive virtues (e.g. social solidarity, compassion, positive human relations and citizenship), democratic principles (equity and social justice) and the commitment to decolonization ideals guided by altruism and common good, are under serious threat. The book goes a long way in unraveling how African universities can respond to these challenges at the levels of institutional management, academic scholarship, the structure of knowledge production and distribution, institutional culture, policy and curriculum.

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