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The Accra Workshop of 1972 marked a turning point in the development of the African university. By adopting the theme: Creating the African university: Emerging Issues of the 1970s, the workshop challenged the status quo of the African university, and proposed a new model for university development in a developing continent searching for a new identity. Since then only a handful of articles and books have been written on the role of the African university. This book by Professor Wandira is, therefore, a welcome and timely contribution on some of the issues raised at the workshop.

The book examines the past, present and future development of African universities in four thoughtful essays. Each essay is a critical study of a specific issue of major concern, and analyses broadly the internal and external conflicts that beset developing African universities about their national and international obligations and roles. The central theme of the book is that every model of university development reveals that the continuing conceptual problems confronting African universities are the "difficulties of reconciling the legitimate but particularistic concerns of society with the desirable but universalistic perspective of the genius of the world university community".

Examples are given to show that a developing university continually faces the dilemma of having to
choose between conflicting conceptions leading to the conclusion that rôle conflicts are an inevitable consequence of university development. The message to universities and the public is clear: instead of regretting conflicts, they should accept them as challenges, and regard the resolution of any conflict as part and parcel of the process of national integration.

The book is well planned and the essays follow a natural sequence. The first essay examines aspects of early models of university development and provides a historical perspective of some of the main conceptual problems of development up to the time of the Accra Workshop. Some of the issues discussed are university entrance qualifications in countries with poorly developed secondary school systems; adapting university curricula and maintaining international standards; and expanding the rôle of the university in a developing country. These are still controversial issues to-day.

The second essay analyses the conceptual problems and opportunities confronting the one-country-one-university institution. The point is made that despite the unique circumstances of such institutions there are built-in areas of conflict in their development such as partnership with national government itself and the limitation of resources. The conclusion is that conflicts are inevitable in such universities. In particular, such universities may be compelled by circumstances to devise alternative strategies that will provide unique models of university development. The essay should be read by those who are associated with such a university. It is unfortunate, however, that the essay is not controversial; nor does it suggest any solutions or strategies. Clearly, partnership with a national government is a delicate and controversial issue. What rôle should the university play in this partnership? Are there specific rôles it can play to accelerate or direct its own development? How does university and Government bureaucracy affect this partnership? Should the university adopt an aggressive or
passive rôle? One would have preferred an essay that was
controversial enough to challenge both the university and
the State to reflect upon their relationship, and their
respective rôles.

The third essay examines the opportunities as
well as the problems of expanding the rôle of the univer-
sity in out-of-school and continuing education. The
provision of basic and vocational education is an acute
problem throughout Africa to-day. Should universities
be involved and what rôle should they expect to play?
How would involvement influence their development?
These are some of the important issues discussed here.
The conclusion is that this is the most important area in
which a developing African university can make its mark
and secure its future as a national and international
institution. The challenge to universities is clear:
can academics leave their ivory towers and apply their
energies and skills to resolve an urgent social problem?
Yet clearly the acceptance of such a rôle has other pro-
found implications for university development. In parti-
cular, universities must undergo major changes in their
methods of organisation and teaching; and they must
device new non-traditional ways to cater for a different
kind of student body. Are African universities courageous
and resourceful enough to accept this challenge? This
essay has much to offer to those who believe that the
university should extend its influence beyond its walls.

The fourth essay deals with the vexing problem
of staff recruitment and training – another area of
concern in Africa. The essay discusses areas of conflict
such as competition with government and other agencies for
the same candidates, the cost of localisation and the
problem of rapid and over-localisation. It also examines
the goals and objectives of such training programmes.
Are such programmes usually correct in assuming that
existing traditions within the university will remain
unchanged? Do programmes prepare participants for the
future? What factors determine whether training is
done locally or abroad? Should the training of young academics include teaching strategies? What incentives or sanctions should a university adopt? These questions are relevant in any university undertaking staff development. The essay suggests some strategies for staff development: that the university might be the main agent for the recruitment and training of manpower for the state; that staff development might be a co-operative venture among the universities of a country; and that regional co-operation in staff development might be undertaken by one-country-one-university institutions. This is an important essay for those who are involved in staff development as it offers some fresh ideas.

It is remarkable that this small book deals effectively with some complex problems of university development. The essays, individually or collectively, provide a sound base from which one can examine how any African university perceives its rôle and its development. Each essay is complete on its own and, hence, a reader can select those that interest him. The book certainly deserves to be read by academics, students and the general public. It has something to offer every interested reader. In particular, it challenges universities and governments to reflect upon their own conceptions of how a university ought to develop and what rôle it should play in national development. It also challenges scholars to study in depth particular aspects of university development.

This book is written at a time when the traditional rôle of the university continues to be challenged everywhere. The very existence of any African university appears likely to depend more upon its capacity and resourcefulness to respond to urgent social needs of a country than upon the traditional rôle of producing annually a small elite group. It is, therefore, a time when academics of vision are needed to carve out imaginative models of university development to meet the challenging problems of to-day and to-morrow. This book is a step in this direction and Professor Wandira must be given credit for continuing the debate on the rôle of the African university in development. It is a pity that the book does not go far enough. It is not enough just to describe possible areas of conflict. Each essay could have been more provocative, more controversial and more challenging.