

# COMMITTEE FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN AFRICA

NEWSLETTER N. 15 SPRING 1999

## Introduction

This issue of CAFA's Newsletter continues our analysis of the post-structural adjustment period in African universities. The most immediate impact of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) has been the defunding of African universities and the consequent repression of student and faculty opposition. This phase is vividly presented by Moctar Al Haji Hima, the former President of the Nigerian Students Union, in an interview.

Barbara Koffa graphically illustrates the devastating consequences of years of war on the schools of Liberia and the Liberian children themselves, who often were turned into soldiers. In this context, it is important to note that, though not every country in Africa has recently experienced warfare, (a) African school systems have suffered similar consequences from World Bank- and IMF-constructed SAPs which have literally waged a war on them, (b) the loss of hope caused by the destruction of schooling as a path to a better future has been an important factor in the recruitment of African youth as soldiers (as studies of Sierra Leone and Liberia itself indicate).

Where schools are still functioning, privatization is well underway and it is now taking place even within the public universities, as we learn from an interview with Dr. Gorgui, a Senegalese academic.

Finally, CAFA looks at the role of U.S.-based study abroad programs play in the recolonization of African universities when U.S. academicians take advantage of an immiserated educational system for their own purposes and proceed without regard for the fate of their African colleagues and students. In the hope of contributing to raising awareness of this problem, we propose a "Code of Ethics for Global Education in Africa." Although the Code is not in a final form, we hope it will stimulate a debate on this matter and that you will send us your thoughts on the Code, which we will publish in a future issue of the CAFA Newsletter.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Globalization and Academic Ethics.....	3
On the History and Current State of the Student Movement in the Niger Republic.....	5
Post-war Education in Liberia.....	10
The World Bank, Privatization and the Fate of Education in Senegal.....	12

### ETS Discriminates Against African Students and Then Backs Down

Discrimination against African students by international educational agencies comes in many forms, not the least is discrimination in the application procedure for scholarships to study in the US. Starting in the Summer of 1996, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) began to require that its TOEFL exam (Test of English as a Foreign Language) must be taken only in computerized form. ETS also asked overseas students taking the test to pay 60% more for the exam, raising the fee from ETS to \$125. According to the *Fair Test Examiner* (Summer 1996), protests mounted against these changes in several countries. But clearly it was African students who were the most discriminated against by these new regulations. In Africa, few students have access to computer even at the college level, not to mention at the high school level. Even in middle class families personal computers are extremely rare because, on an average, the cost of a computer would equal the family's yearly income. The same applies for the CD ROM, made available by ETS, which provides a tutorial on the computerized TOEFL. This too is an piece of equipment that very few can buy or have access to the select city outlets that sell it. Thus, requiring a computerized exam sent a clear signal: African students are not in demand as applicants, except for a tiny minority of well-to-do youth who have a higher income and are being groomed to become members of the future elite.

It is important to add that the demand for computerized tests was not dictated by any pedagogical principle. On the contrary, it went against pedagogical wisdom, since computerized tests put many students at a disadvantage. For example, computerized tests do not allow students to compare and to check their answers against each other in the different parts of the test. Scrolling does not do the job, as it gives only one page at a time and makes it more difficult both to find errors and to trust them.

The protests against computer-based testing in Sub-Saharan Africa, however, were successful...for the moment. Beginning in the Spring of 1999, the ETS will provide paper and pencil TOEFL exams in Africa. But this does not mean that the ETS is giving up on its plan to totally computerize testing of Africans. An ETS Vice-President John Tigg said, "ETS and its client boards continue to believe that computer-based testing is the desired test-delivery system of the future."

## Globalization and Academic Ethics

by  
The Editors of CAFA

One of the consequences of economic globalization has been the internationalization of U.S. higher education institutions and universities. International studies, study abroad programs, international cultural exchanges have become a "must" on most American campuses. In the last decade, a number of major U.S. educational organizations have called for "provisions should be made to ensure that at least 10 percent of all students who receive baccalaureate degrees in this country will have had a significant educational experience abroad during their undergraduate years." (See Michael R. Laubacher, *Encounters with Difference: Student Perspectives of the Role of Out-of-Class Experiences in Education Abroad* (Newport, CA: Greenwood Press, 1996). Equally noticeable have been the efforts by U.S. administration and funding agencies to turn American academic institutions into "global universities," i.e. global educational centers, attracting from and catering to an international student body.

We have also witnessed the growing engagement of US academicians and colleges in the maintenance of academic institutions in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the former socialist countries, and the management in those same regions of private, generally English-speaking universities, available for the majority of working students.

All these developments constitute the most substantial innovation in US academic life over the last decade. They have been promoted and hailed as a great contribution to the spread of "quality education" and global citizenship. The reality, however, may be quite different. We call on our colleagues to ponder on the implications of these changes, especially for African universities, and to oppose the necessary goals which often inspire them. Consider the following:

1. The internationalization of the curriculum and academic activities is often conceived within a framework of global economic competition that turns multicultural awareness into a means of neo-colonial exploitation rather than a means of understanding and valuing other people's histories and struggles.

2. As the National Security Education Program (NSEP) has demonstrated, the Pentagon and the CIA are the most prominent government agencies promoting and financing the internationalization of U.S. academic education. This government is inevitable since they, more than ever, need a cosmopolitan personnel at a time when the U. S. government is openly striving for economic and military hegemony in every region of the world.

3. The globalization of U.S. universities has been facilitated by the underdevelopment of public education throughout the Third World, upon reconstructions of the World Bank and IMF in the name of "modernization" and "structural adjustment."

4. In some African countries where universities have been shut down, the elite facilities are often used by American study abroad programs. These programs benefit from the cheap cost of study, and



the program directors (at very low wages) laid off teachers and former students as sub-facilitators.

U.S. teachers and college administrators are being financed by USAID to intervene in several third world and former socialist countries to (a) set up private universities, (b) restructure entire departments, schools, programs, curricula. In other words, U.S. academics are being presently employed by the U.S. government to carry on cultural/educational work abroad that suits its economic, political, ideological objectives.

Considering the above developments, we believe that the time has come for U.S. academics to show our colleagues in Africa and other third world regions the same solidarity that would be expected of us by colleagues in our own countries.

It is in this context that we are proposing the following "University Teachers Code of Ethics for Global Education in Africa." We urge you to circulate it among colleagues in the institutions where you work, at conferences, and other academic events and ask people to comment upon it. Please send your comments to one of the coordinators of CAFA as well as possible. They will help us in the coming months to construct a final code of ethics that can be subscribed to by a substantial number of people involved in "global education in Africa." We intend to present the code to the organizations involved in financing or overseeing global education initiatives as well. From your input, we want to see this declaration—circulated as it might be...to promote solidarity with our African colleagues and campaigns to reverse the neo-colonialization of African universities.

#### University Teachers' Draft Code of Ethics for Global Education in Africa

We are university teachers and we publicly declare our adherence to the following principles of academic ethics in our work in Africa:

—we will never, under any circumstance, work (as researchers, with a study abroad program, or in any other capacity) in an African university where students or the faculty are on strike or which has been shut down by students' or teachers' strikes and protests against police repression and structural adjustment cut backs.

—we will never take a position or cooperate with the World Bank, the IMF, USAID, or any other organization whose policy is to repress African labor the result of the production and distribution of knowledge and to devalue African people's contribution to world culture.

—we will never take advantage of the improvisation to which African colleagues and students have been reduced, and appropriate the educational facilities and resources from which African colleagues and students have been de facto excluded because of lack of means. Knowledge acquired under such conditions would be antagonistic to the spirit of multiculturalism and scholarly solidarity.

—we will consult with colleagues and activists in the countries where we carry on research, so as to ensure that our research serves the needs of the people it studies, and is shaped with the cooperation of people whose lives will be affected by it, rather being dictated by funding agencies' agenda.

## On the History and Current State of the Student Movement in the Niger Republic

Based on an interview with Mamear Al Haji Hama,  
Former President of the Nigerian Students Union  
with Oussema Akhbar, Coordinator of CAFA  
Niamey, December 2, 1998

The Nigerian student movement has gone through different phases in recent years, because it was banned during the military government of General Kowaché and only recently has been able to regain its initiative, even though it was never completely destroyed and it continued to operate underground.

It is a broad movement and I want to first dispel the idea that it is an ethnically oriented movement, as some have claimed. In the period from 1974 to 1985, the leadership—first in the Executive Committee and the Directing Committee—of the USNUP (Union des Etudiants Nigeriens de l'Université de Niamey) was predominantly Hausa, but within it there were also committees coming from other ethnic groups. Those who stress the ethnic elements, and keep asking, "to what ethnic group does he and he belong?" are people interested in promoting divisions within the student movement, who try to convince some groups that they are being marginalized. It is true that between 1974 and 1985, the majority of the leadership was Hausa, but even among the Hausa there is a great diversity. There is uniformity as far as the language, but not as far as the culture is concerned. You have the Hausa from Daura South West, from Tadmou (North West), Hausa from Doudaki (North West), Hausa from Maradi (East), Zande (East).

Also at the level of the USN (Union des Etudiants), the ethnic element is not important; it is not a factor in the choice of the leadership. The USN relies on a set of principles, on certain texts, on its statutes and its internal regulations. It operates on the basis of democratic centralism. The leaders must come from the grassroots and must have known everything bit by bit, they also

must know the statutes well and have assumed all the responsibilities to begin one day to become part of the Directing Committee. In addition, they must have a good political formation. You must have a socialist perspective to become a leader in the student movement, particularly if you want to have a position of responsibility like the Directing Committee. The "line" has softened, but the objectives are still asked to conform to the guidelines of the organization, which are anti-imperialist and therefore can only be on the left. This is the ideological direction of the movement.

If you come from the grassroots as far as your ideological formation is concerned, if you master the principles of the organization, that is, if you support all the anti-imperialist principles, you can aspire to become a general delegate for a supporting committee located in an office, a high school, or a university. At the university, for example, there are African committees, sport committees, etc. If you have been voted this way, if you have shown that you are capable of defending the interests of everybody, and that you support the principles of the organization, you can aspire one day to become a member of the Executive Committee. And if you have been a good member of the Executive Committee and have demonstrated that you can defend the interests of all the students, again in conformity with the principles of the organization, your section can propose you as a candidate to become part of the Directing Committee, which is the leading structure of the organization. The Directing Committee administers the affairs of the organization, not only at the national level,



but at the international level as well. It supervises the affairs of all Nigerian students wherever they are, whether they study at home or abroad. These are the questions the comrades take into account. Are you a good militant? Are you well-grounded ideologically and politically? Are you a comrade capable of defending everybody and remembering the principles of the organization? The other factors are of no interest for the student movement, because it is truly a mass organization.

Certainly the UNN has always had regional structures as well. This is because of the activities it carries on during the vacation period. Usually, UNN functions full-time, twelve months a year, because the Directing Committee meets in activities during the vacation period. When the students return to the rural areas, the comrades too return to their villages, to help their parents or to set up other activities. What's happening is that by returning to their regions, the students realize what has taken place in the life of the country side during the year months when they were absent, and can make an assessment of the evolution of the population during the year, which then serves to make a more complete and reliable analysis of the national situation. People examine how the international situation has affected the condition of people in the country and then they examine the national life in all its dimensions. It's not just the problems of students that are examined, but also the problems of the peasants. How do they manage to survive? Has there been improvement or regression in their conditions? How has the national situation affected the life of the organization? The problems have to be identified to be corrected.

The Directing Committee relies on the work of the "vacation structures" to make this type of analysis. These vacation structures are created in April and function from April to October, when the people involved participate at the gatherings of the general councils of the regions, when they present their reports, region by region, so that an assessment of the real national situation can be made. The vacation

structures, then, are a positive thing and they are not organized on ethnic bases. The comrades are chosen to go to this or that region and they returned to organize activities for the vacations; there is no connection with the regional or ethnic origin of the comrades involved.

There is another aspect to this question. Between 1965 and 1967 the Nigerian student movement suffered a serious setback under the dictatorship of General Gowon, who dissolved its organization after killing a number of its members and deporting others. The result was a state of paralysis, because the student movement no longer had an organization, so the only organizations that the regime allowed were cultural or regional ones. But our comrades could not retreat unorganized for too long and they utilized these channels. People regrouped for cultural activities around the literary commissions or the regional associations that always organize activities for the vacations. It was through these work circles that the students were able to address national questions again. At the university level, the regional associations were the only ones that could meet because trying to organize was very risky, and when they did the comrades were systematically persecuted, they were taken by the police and deported, or were sent before time to do the civic service. But they could organize on the regional level, because the authorities allowed it. So, there were consultations and people used to start activities, even if they did not have the means to defend themselves. But people knew that the regional discussions eventually include only people from the region.

Under the cover of regional associations, then, the student movement strove to overcome the constraints imposed by the dictatorship, but without pushing too far, because it was not possible to organize political activities like before. What they could organize were cultural activities, educational and literacy programs to be carried on during the vacation period. There were also fund raising activities to help comrades in difficulty or to finance the activities for the vacation structures. When students came

back they always gave a report of their activities and this would give people an idea about the national situation to such a point that when the student movement revived in 1967 there was no discontinuity with respect to an understanding of the national situation.

In 1967, when the Nigerian students required the initiative, they were able to force the Gowon government, at the end of its regime, to accept the existence of their structures in their old organizational form, as Union of Nigerian Students (Union Des Etudiants Nigeriens, UENI), this time with a Directing Committee inside the University of Niamey, which was also the Directing Committee of the UENEN (Union Des Etudiants Nigeriens) at the University of Niamey. When the movement was revived, in April of 1967, there was no rupture with the past, because the reports produced by the vacation structures served to analyze what had occurred during the 1965-1967 period.

At that time, it was agreed that it was necessary to define a program. The most active sections of the UENN - those of the students from Niamey, from Cotonou (Benin), from Lomé (Togo), Abidjan (Ivory Coast), Dakar (Senegal), France - gathered, then, during the vacations, around the UENEN at the University of Niamey, to discuss what could be done to get the government to recognize the organization, so that it could regain its credibility and its means of intervention, which in the past had made it the only mass weight in favor of different dictatorships. It was also the only movement organized at the national level.

There were two types of schemes. The first proposed that the university students meet during and leave High-schools and elementary schools students independent, but to have their own organization. Another scheme proposed that the old form of the UEN be kept. There were periods of reflection that took place during the vacations. In any case, the mandate was to launch a vast movement which would in the end prevail over the military government and, therefore, over military dictatorship which continued even after the death of the first dictator Gowon

and his replacement by Ali Chalfon.

It was necessary between 1965 and 1967 to find the means to launch a movement that could prevail over the military regime and create the conditions for democracy. These were the questions from which people started with in 1967. At this time, one began to give equal representation at the regional level, and there was a need, therefore, for comrades who knew the regional situation well in order to give the mobilization campaigns. Thus, the comrades were regrouped according to their regional origins and they were put in a position of being able to go on a mission at any time of the year without this costing anything to the organization. They could keep in contact easily with their younger brothers who had remained in the regions. Thus, it was much easier for them to go and mobilize the comrades fast, if it was necessary, for more to drive the militants of the UEN continued to be persecuted. This is why it was considered necessary to strengthen the regional structures, and give them a precise mandate. It is not because the comrades regrouped instinctively according to their ethnic origin. They regrouped because they had a precise mandate which they executed at the level of the different regions. I think that any democracy must recognize the fact people have to a particular locality, otherwise they would not be able to elect their members, and deputies. This is democratic and political regionalism in full respect of the principles of the organization, in the country, in the high schools, and regional colleges. This is what happened in 1968.

At the end of 1967, as the student unions were reorganized, and it was decided that the mandates of the vacation structures was finished and they were dissolved. At the level of the University of Niamey, they no longer had a permanent existence. But now the Directing Committee decided that the "vacation structures" should exist in conformity with the way things were before the regional structures were imposed, and that they should again function from April to October, until they deposit their reports. These structures work under the guidance of the UEN, which manages the activities of the high school



students, and the Directing Committee - whose directives are transmitted through the different Executive Committees.

Between 1964 to 1967 the student movement suffered a political defeat because the politicians of the Third Republic managed to infiltrate the student unions. They realised that in Niger only the student union consistently expressed a national front and that they could not have controlled their local politics unless they managed to weaken the student unions. Thus, they followed the success from a political viewpoint and used many tricks, including the ethnic card, to divide the students. As a consequence, the Central Union (Central Students), which had been able to survive and remain united from 1960 until recently, despite all the demagogues there have been since independence, today is divided. On one side there is the USTN and on the other there is the National Confederation of Nigerian Workers (Confédération Nationale Des Travailleurs Nigeriens, CNTN). The USTN is not yet divided, but the politicians have decided not to recognise it any longer, despite the decision by the National Conference which recognised the organisation. They have dissolved again the organisation (the USTN) and today it is functioning underground.

Because of the infiltration and the fact that the committees have been weakened, there has been a resurgence of ethnic feelings. What happens at the national level always has immediate consequences at the level of high school students. In the case of university students it is there, but not in a way that is open and can be expressed because the committees know that any concession to ethnicisation prevents you from having any leadership role in the organisation. The fact is that the organisation does not tolerate that people who are active in the regional political formations to return and have a position of responsibility in the organisation.

There are no representatives of political parties in the organisation, because it is a mass organisation that must pressure the government among its members. If the commission for the "one-democracy" was to plan a debate on the polit-

ical configuration of Niger, clearly the committees can discuss their political views. If with the occasion they want to make their political affiliations known, they can do so, because this is acceptable in the context of an intellectual discussion. People can present their views and defend their belonging to a particular political formation, or defend a particular political party with regard to its social program or to compare it to another party, but they cannot hold a position in a party and a position of leadership in the student union.

Q. Let us look now at the international level. What does the USTN think of the IMF?

A. (Chaotic pause). Oh, it is an old story because obviously any serious left organisation, above all an anti-imperialist organisation, must oppose the international financial institutions operating in the present political order. If you have an anti-imperialist perspective you don't want financial capital to come in the country and impose its will and continue to exploit with inequality the population. This is why the USTN, in taking a position, always analyses the overall situation in view of this perspective. In recent times, we have witnessed the collapse of new socialist internationalism, but the question for us is whether this legitimises the exploitation of people and of the Third World by financial capital. As an anti-imperialist organisation, the USTN refuses the idea that international financial capital can come to our countries and impose their views and demands on our people as if our people were not able to organise themselves and define for themselves a development scheme, in agreement with their needs rather than with the needs of the imperialism.

Q. What has been the impact of the intervention of the World Bank and IMF on the structure of education in Niger?

A. With the signing of the first SAP program, in the period from 1982 to 1987, there was a very restrictive educational policy because the state

was asked to concern itself only with elementary education and completely private tertiary education, from the high schools to the universities. There has been no increase in the budget for these two school levels. The USTN had to rebel against this plan, which did not take into any account the real situation of the country. In Niger the rate of enrolment is about 20%, and it has not substantially improved since 1960. If we consider the number of persons who have had a tertiary education and those in particular who have a university diploma, and then we ask the state to disengage at this level, what we are really doing is sacrificing all the technical and professional formation in the country. They just want people to learn reading and writing, but what we say - "we" being the USTN - is what is the use of learning to read and write for six years, if afterwards people do not have any use for it? People don't realize in Niger that already now there is the rural area who don't pass the exams to enter a college or do not get into a college because their parents are poor, have no means to farming and a few years later they have become illiterate again. There is plenty of "second degree illiterates" in Niger. What is going to happen if the Nigerian count only on the state after the first six years of education? What is this leading up to? It is the people who have the financial means who are now in charge of the

implementation of these programs, because they have the money and their children, are never born in Niger. From the time when they begin the second cycle they leave Niger to go to study abroad, since their parents have the means. These are the only ones who will have the benefit of a higher education. Another form of oligarchy is going to be created and these will be the people who are going to lead the country. The masses will be at their mercy.

These are the contradictions the World Bank does not seem to acknowledge. But we should not have any illusions, because the World Bank is a bank and, like every bank, all it cares for is the profitability of its investments. The World Bank is guided by a passion of money. This is why it does not care that people get an education. When we talk about schooling we should always ask, "what is it for?" What are the objectives? For instance, if people go to school and they are asked to learn a foreign language we should ask why, what is it for? What are people going to do with it after they have learned it? It is important to know at the very beginning what are our concrete goals? We support a formal education, literacy, an education that is technical as well as cultural and above all an education that is democratic. But the World Bank is not interested in all this, again because it is guided by the passion of money. We want a democratic school, not one reserved for privileged people.



## Post-war Education in Liberia

by  
Barbara B. Koffa

Seven years of war have caused a massive destruction in the physical infrastructure of our country. Homes, schools, and other public buildings, shops, stores, roads occupied the wrath of the warring parties. And these increased in number from two, initially, in December 1989 - Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia and the Armed Forces of Liberia, the National Army that was supporting the incumbent president Samuel Kanyon Doe - to eleven by the height of the war. All warring factions resorted to the use not only of small arms but also of heavy artillery which caused the maximum damage.

Reconstructing the educational system in the aftermath of the war has been extremely difficult in several ways. First, we have had to deal with the psychological and physical abuse which so many Liberian boys and girls had suffered. It has been an uphill battle to get them to return to the classrooms, even their minds, as well as their bodies, need rehabilitation first. Meanwhile, stories abound about how those who have gone through the rehabilitation process return to the battlefield at the first opportunity that presents itself.

Two of the institutions that are having an impact on education are the Children Assistance Program (CAP) and the Doe Boys' Homes, which is run by the Sebastian of Doe Boys, a Catholic group. Here the children take vocational and literacy courses, undergo psychological therapy with trained counselors, and engage in physical activities like sports, especially football which is very popular in Liberia. Combined exercises of body and mind help to prime the children in the right direction, although there is a large number of them who absolutely refuse rehabilitation.

While the situation of education has

improved immensely, compared with the period immediately after the first cease fire in 1990, much remains to be done. In addition to the damage suffered by the school buildings, all the benches and chairs have been destroyed as they were used as firewood during the war. This has placed an additional burden on the parents, who in addition to having to buy books and uniforms, now fix the chairs and benches - as a pre-requirement for admission of their children/women to school.

But the standard of living of our people has greatly fallen in the aftermath of the war. The majority of parents who work as civil servants are underpaid (salaries are still based on the pre-war scale fixed in April 1980) and go without a pay check for months at a time. Recently, the government introduced what it calls the "Annual Facilitation Program (AFP)," which is supposed to reduce the financial burden on the parents who have to send their children to school. The scheme reduces the school fees that students must pay in order to enter government-owned elementary, junior and senior high schools and also pays their fees for the National Examinations administered by the West African Examination Council (WAEC), which is taken annually by sixth and seventh graders in Liberian schools.

While the AFP has led to an increase in the number of students enrolling in government-owned schools, the situation has worsened due to the lack of space in the classrooms, and has not really eased the burden on the parents who must still provide for books and other requirements for their children. Moreover, the larger enrollment means that some students have to stand outside the classrooms and miss valuable teaching time.

Another serious problem making the future of post-war education in the lack of teach-

ers. In many parts of the world teachers' services are the least compensated and Liberia is no exception. However, in post-war Liberia many of them have decided to leave for greener pastures at home and abroad. Many teachers who had fled the country and gone to neighboring countries because of the war, later decided to stay rather than return to the situation that were to be expected. As a result, the few remaining in the school system have to make sacrifices and teach both morning and evening out of sheer dedication to the students. Working both with local and international NGOs is now a big trend in Liberia.

Many schools have no textbooks for the students, and when the books become available they are often not expensive for the average Liberian. So, very often, the students must study without books or have to share them with their colleagues. To try to solve this problem,

UNESCO has sponsored a project undertaken by the Ministry of Education. The idea is to print textbooks by Liberian authors for the students' use. Let us hope that this initiative will succeed.

Unfortunately, the National Government has failed to prioritize education. Instead, more such as security and defense take the larger share of the National Budget. This trend, however, will have to change, if any improvement is to occur

in the education of our youths. Presently, the situation with education is dismal. In most rural schools the teachers have to survive in meager capacities and hardly ever get paid. They have to sacrifice even more than their urban colleagues. They sit in crumbling buildings, on road bricks, trying to teach children who have had to walk for miles to get to school. Often one teacher teaches three or four different grades and the lack of textbooks is even more obvious. It seems that some help may be forthcoming from international NGOs planning to assist these schools. However, the overall picture is desperate. Definitely much attention needs to be focused on our country's educational system, because it is facing very serious problems in post-war Liberia.

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## The World Bank, Privatization, and the Fate of Education in Senegal

Interview with Dr. Guept from the English Department of the Université de Dakar. (Dr. Guept is presently a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the Ohio State University in the Department of African American and African Studies.)

Q: Dr. Guept can you tell us how Structural Adjustment and privatization have affected higher education in Senegal?

A: We often hear that the changes that SNAF has introduced have created a "new Senegalese University," but this refers to not what the Senegalese people had expected. The "new University" entails a limited number of students and employs, possibly, a limited number of teachers, and marks the end of public education in Senegal. Prior independence till approximately 1980, the year of President Senghor's government, the Senegalese University was open to everybody. If you had a baccalaureate degree, you were entitled to enroll, and the students were coming from every part of the country and from every social group and class. Students from poor families and rich families sat there, because enrollment depended on your social background as well as your academic achievements. The musician of the students' families were also taken into account for admission. The university was open to everybody, it was truly a "public university."

However, since 1980-1983, a new model has been in place, under pressure by the World Bank and IMF which have instructed the local authorities to limit the number of students that are admitted and the number of teachers too. Their argument was that the country could not develop, if so much money was invested in education. (Senegal apparently is one of the countries that spend the greatest part of the national budget on education.) The idea is that selection will guarantee excellence. Thus, today, an attempt is made to ensure the participation of students from different family backgrounds. Students now do not have the same opportunities they had in the past,

because the students who have affluent parents can afford to go to private schools, while students coming from poor families cannot afford it. So, now, access to education varies depending on one's social class.

Q: Why should going to a private school make a difference?

A: You are privileged if you go to a private school because private schools have more resources. We are told that they are run better because they are run on a profit basis and teachers are dismissed if they do not do well their job. In reality, most of these teachers have not attended any teachers' training schools or colleges. So, normally, these schools are not better than the public ones as far as the preparation of the teachers are concerned, and the inspectors do not properly supervise them.

Q: Who sponsors the private schools? How are they created? Is their expansion part of a conspiracy to kill public education?

A: Ten years ago it was very difficult to open a private school, but today it is very easy. Once you have been a teacher in a public school you are given the opportunity to open a private school. You just need to come with your proposal and you can get loans from a bank or possibly can be helped by the government and then you can open your school.

"Conspiracy" is a strong word, but without admitting it the government is really trying to kill the public education system. I am convinced that the government wants to get rid of public schooling and lay education in the hands of the private sector. This means that in

the future, education will not be available to everybody. Most likely it will be a privilege of the rich. People from the poor suburbs or the rural areas will no longer have access to it. There will be a big gap between the rich and the poor not only as far as the living conditions, but also with regard to education. Maybe I am being over-optimistic, but even if public education survives, its quality will be abysmally poor compared to that in the private sector.

Q: What is the main difference between public and private schools?

A: If you go to the private school you can study from October until the end of academic year in July, and then you can sit for your exams and probably you have a better chance to pass than those students who come from the public schools. For there are many strikes in public schools. Moreover, public school teachers are not very committed to teaching because they have to teach in the schools where they are officially posted by the government, and that they also have to teach in the private schools as well and they spend most of their time there. So the problem of "excellence" is a serious one. Those who are from the private schools have more opportunities to show their "excellence" because they are given more opportunities to learn and "excel".

Q: As a teacher how are you affected by these irregularities?

A: If you ask a question in a classroom and receive a good answer, you are always inclined to think that the student comes from a private school, and most of the time they do. It is a shame. Now you have to be rich to benefit from education.

Q: Let's about "decentralization" which presumably breaks "excellence" and "admission rights" to the university. What is your understanding of these concepts that the World Bank and the IMF keep pushing on African governments and

Ministers of education? How do they work in Senegal?

A: "Decentralization" means the shifting of decision-making from the ministry of education to the different university departments. Before the intervention of the World Bank and IMF, the assignments of the students to different departments used to come from the Ministry of Education. Now a limit has been set on the number of students going to the university, and the decision to assign students to different departments is being made by the teachers. They decide primarily on the basis of the grades the students have received until the time of examination. So from the beginning of the academic year the battle begins. They have a limited number of seats for each department and each college. I understand that the figures really come from the World Bank and the IMF and they (the university staff) have to abide by the quotas. In the English Department we receive a quota. We received approximately 1000 or 1050 applications and we are just told not to admit more than 400 or 500. So, you see if you receive those applications you have got to select the best ones among the lot and naturally the students who have had access to better schools (i.e. "or have more connections") are privileged.

Q: Does it mean that even if you pass the examination and have the passing grade point average 10 or 11 or 12 out of 20, you can be rejected, because you did not have any regular schooling and there is no seat left for you?

A: Yes, those who have received a better education in the private schools have a better chance to get the seats, while those from public schools are rejected.

Q: The World Bank's adjustment and globalization agenda throughout Africa demands the privatization of education, so that now you have a sudden boom of private schools, including polytechnic schools within public universities. Is this happening in Senegal? I heard, for



However, that there is a plan to create a private Institute of Management and Economics that will compete with the Department of Economics within the same public university. How will these kinds of conflicts operate?

A: The way I understood it is that there are some teachers who are in the same field, in this case economics, who get together and set up an institute within their college. I don't know how to explain it, but that is how it is. The argument is that the university has not been able to provide proper services for the public and the private sectors outside the university, they have not created the proper expertise, and the teachers who know they have this expertise make the connection possible. So, outside people come informally and contact the teachers for the kind of assistance and expertise they need, and they pay for it.

Q: Is it a private deal? A private training enterprise?

A: It is private. They offer private training and people pay for that.

Q: Can a student who is not associated with a private company, but is enrolled in the university's Department of Economics attend the training offered by the institute within this Department?

A: Only if you can pay for it yourself.

Q: And yet this institute is within the public university?

A: It is in the public university and the money earned goes into the pocket of the teachers.

Q: Isn't this a form of privatization?

A: Yes. A similar thing is going on in the high schools where privatization is also evident. There are hundreds of private schools in the districts in Delhi, even in the poor districts. This

has been encouraged by the government. These private schools are created with their own management. But here these institutes use the university premises, they offer private training and the teachers get paid directly. It is a case of mismanagement, because the university has not created teaching opportunities for the teachers, outside of their regular schedules.

Q: So, the institute is operating within the public university and benefiting from public investments, but is not accepting the regular university students. This is not mismanagement, it is a question of unequal access to public institutions. If I am a taxpayer and this is an institution that receives my tax money, why is it that my children cannot have access to public education through that very institute whose creation is partly due to my tax money? If my child does not want to go through the general training, but would like to attend the institute, why couldn't it be, since the institute is part of the public university?

A: I think it is a problem of mismanagement, because the university authorities have to devise a new system to enable the teachers to work outside their regular teaching hours...

Q: Don't the teachers have the option to operate outside the university hours as private consultants? Isn't that possible in foreign? And isn't there something problematic in the use of public structures to run private activities?

A: Well, we do have inside the university students who are sent by private companies—in addition to the regular students. They use the expertise of the teachers for two, three years and that becomes consultants or whatever else they want. This needs to be organized, the money that students from the private sector pay can even sustain the university.

Q: Is there a students' or a teachers' union that deals with these unfair policies? Are there people addressing these issues? Are teachers all over-

less of the teachers' union?

A: Most of them are, but I don't know the position of the teachers' union on this issue. What I can say is that, yes, it is a problem. Activities are carried out by teachers within the university and the money does not enter into the account of the university. It goes into the pockets of the teachers.

There is also the added problem that you are recruited into a department, you teach there, and receive a salary for that. Apart from the fact that now you use the premises of the university for private teaching, it is bad for your regular students because the time you should allocate to them is used now for your private activities.

Q: But what is the exact wrong? Is your union a real union in the traditional sense of the word?

A: Are you asking me again?

Q: No! I am not criticizing! I just want to understand what type of union you have. Is it a union that is just concerned with the salaries of the teachers, or is it a union that is also committed to teaching and learning and to the protection of the university's integrity regardless of ...

D: Gogoi: [laughs...] I mean they are committed to teaching and learning, but survival is also important...



## WHO IS CAFA AND WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

The Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa (CAFA) consists of people teaching and studying in North America and Europe who are concerned with the increasing violations of academic freedom that are taking place in African universities and who believe that it is crucial that we support the struggle our African colleagues are conducting to assert and preserve their rights.

CAFA was organized in the Spring of 1991 and since then we have been involved in numerous campaigns on behalf of African teachers and students. We have also created and continue to update a "Chronology of the African Student Movement from 1985." The CAFA Newsletter contains scholarly articles on the impact of the World Bank and IMF policies on African education as well as action alerts and other information about student and faculty struggles on African campuses.

CAFA's objectives include:

- \*informing our colleagues about the current situation on African campuses;
- \*setting up an urgent action network to respond promptly to emergency situations;
- \*mobilizing our unions and other academic organizations so that we can put pressure on African academic authorities as well as international agencies like the World Bank and IMF;
- \*organizing delegations that will make direct contact with teachers and students and their organizations in Africa.

The annual fee for membership in CAFA is \$25. CAFA's coordinators and the editors of the CAFA Newsletter are:

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