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Hoisting the "knowledge bank" on its own petard

The World Bank and the double crisis of african universities

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Struggle is like education and it just keeps going on.
(DERRICK GWALA of the 'Kennedy Road Committee' quoted in Pithouse, *Our struggle*, 30)

For 'tis the sport to have the enginer
Hoist with his own petard, an't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines
And blow them at the moon.
(SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet*, Act 3, scene 4, lines 206-209)

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INTRODUCTION

The 'double crisis' that the first issue of the *Edu-factory Journal* investigates is not new to African university students and faculty. Africans' double crisis began in the 1980s, when the World Bank and other international financial institutions subjected most of their governments to Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that tore apart every aspect of their economic and cultural life, leading to an epochal restructuring of the universities.

The international financial meltdown of 2008 has hardly changed the academic landscape that emerged over the last two decades. Instead, change has come from the successful struggles African students have made to gain access to university education--internationally promoted as the path to a prosperous life for individuals and economic development for countries as a whole--in the face of opposition from

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the World Bank that is calling for a reduction of access. These struggles have created a Stalemate in the war between African students and agencies like the World Bank that is rapidly unraveling and heading toward a socially explosive denoument.

This paper will chart the formation of the Stalemate and the consequences of its dissolution. Such an analysis is essential for the Edu-factory project that intends to be 'a space where struggles connect, a space of resistance and organisational experiments', for it is important to know *what* the struggles are that are being connected.[1] The connection between African students' struggle and cognitive labour struggles in Europe and North America poses many of the same issues concerning the meaning of solidarity that were encountered in previous periods. Just because the adjective changes (from 'industrial' to 'cognitive') does not mean that the political questions posed by a hierarchy of labour powers do not apply.

THE CHRONIC DOUBLE CRISIS OF AFRICAN* UNIVERSITIES

We can only appreciate the nature and significance of the Stalemate, when we consider the World Bank's SAPs for Africa since the mid 1980s. They not only destroyed African economies and forced governments to dramatically reduce public investment in education especially at the tertiary level, they also redefined post-colonial Africa's place in the new International Division of Labour which globalisation made possible and required. Unambiguously, African countries were assigned to the very same position they had occupied in colonial eras, when their primary function was to provide both raw materials and labour for foreign investors and the international market. This means that the mass of African youths were not to benefit from the developing knowledge and information economy, but they would be destined (with a few exceptions) to become manual workers in it at best.

The World Bank's guidelines for African university education systems were consequently quite simple in the 1980s: cut, cut, cut, freeze public investment in any aspect of academic life--from infrastructure to wages and students' allowances--and reduce student enrolment which *had grown dramatically in the first two decades* after independence.[2] Bankrupt African governments were told that they would not receive World Bank loans unless they reduced students' subsidies and allowances; ended free tuition and charged fees for university education; cut or merged under-enrolled departments; and reduced the size, wages and benefits of faculty and staff.[3] In turn, university administrators learned they would have to find their own funds to continue their institutions' academic activities, as the governments no longer would subsidise university education.

THE DIS-INTEGRATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

These developments marked the end of the political project that had been launched at independence, when the funding of university education was to be the passport to a more autonomous, self-determined 'road to development', and the formation of a self-governing African elite. As Vice Chancellors and heads of departments turned into businessmen overnight, developing 'links' with foreign universities and NGOs, renting facilities to study abroad programs, and channeling classes to do consultancy work, the paradigmatic concept of higher education--as the ticket

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to individual and national self-improvement--was cancelled by the major financial and 'development' agencies. A growing body of literature is now available documenting the effects of this turn.[4] It shows Africa leading the way, as it were, not only in the dismantling of public investment to education, but also in the commercialisation of academic life.

According to the new dispensation, students were to pay for their university education as if it were a commodity while university authorities were to treat them as paying customers; the *direct* intention being that the introduction of tuition fees would reduce the student numbers dramatically. However, this neoliberal perspective on education had many disturbing *indirect* consequences, the primary one being the subversion of the assumption of a common interest among university departments, schools, colleges and programs. For when one commodifies an object, one inevitably must commercialise it, i.e., produce it only with the intent of selling it in a market competing with other sellers of the same or a similar commodity. The same thing applies to education: once commmodified, it will be commercialised and sold competitively.

In the abstract this is obvious, but when translated into the structure of a university, there is hell to pay. A graphic example of this is to be found in Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda (a university that had been once considered one of the best in Africa and hence it was and remains a trend-setter).

In the late 1990s government officials informed the faculty members at Makerere that they had to take an entrepreneurial approach to student enrolment in their courses, departments and faculties. They and their units would be evaluated for further support on the basis of how successfully they attracted students (especially 'paying' ones). Departments tried to 'conserve' their majors by having them take as many of their courses within the department because a certain percentage of student fees went to the Department that offered the course. The more attractive the course, the more it could be 'sold', of course. Consequently, 'turf wars' erupted between departments over the housing of interdisciplinary programs, 'for the right to house a programme translated into a considerable financial advantage'.[5] Soon departments were 'charging' other departments for 'service' courses they gave to the students of other departments. Inevitably in such a regime, there were 'balance of payments' difficulties. The mercantile system within the university, like the one in the world market, inevitably led to violent clashes.

This approach had a huge impact on the curriculum. For example, if tourism were a 'hot' topic, then courses (even programs) in tourism would be offered to the added tuition fee income. This result is a neglect of disciplines that a serious long-term view of the intellectual needs of Uganda would require funding.

This breakdown of university coherence on the administrative level is not unique to Makarare University. Similar developments can be seen, for example, in post-apartheid South Africa.[6] As Richard Pithouse observes: 'Often departments and courses that are not profitable--especially in the arts and humanities are summarily shut down'.[7] Of course, African universities are not alone in this disintegration, these features have been typical of neoliberal university reforms throughout the world; the only difference is that the competitive logic of these reforms is rarely taken to such a bald conclusion.[8]

On all these levels, then, after more than a decade of the commodifying reforms in Africa, the universities are increasingly unable to meet their most vital academic obligations. Conflict has become the order of the day: students against government, faculty colleague against faculty colleague, department against department…and the World Bank against all! Instead of moving to a uni-versity, these universities are kept together increasingly either by a Leviathan (in the form of the police and military) or foreign 'angels' redistributing their largess with an eye to profitability or, inevitably, both.

THE DELEGITIMATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

A related consequence of SAPs has been *the weakening of African universities' intellectual legitimacy*. This development has been quite functional to the interests of global corporations, especially those involved in pharmaceutical and agricultural production. One obvious result has been the almost total marginalisation of African countries from the patent system. For example, only three of them have one or more patents per million of population (Morocco with 3 per million and Gambia and Botswana with 1 per million, whereas Japan has 120 and Switzerland 105 per million).

This does not mean that there is no 'intellectual property' in Africa, of course. The structural adjustment of African universities and their consequent delegitimisation allows global corporations, research NGOs and the World Bank, to present themselves as the institutions that can protect, preserve and make productive Africans' indigenous pharmaceutical and agricultural common knowledge. Certainly, 'bio-prospecting' relies on the general impoverishment of the African countries, that in the wake of liberalisation have now to sell, literally, their birthright.[9] The disabling of the universities gives a powerful contribution to this process, as it weakens the ability of African countries to resist the encroachment of the global corporations, and to enforce measures that would protect Africans' knowledge, 'traditional' or otherwise.

Structural adjustment in African universities reduces research costs by making available a rich pool of cheapened intellectual labour power and research facilities. As is typical of these neoliberal operations, public facilities are first defunded and subverted; only when they are literally on their knees are they formally or informally privatised. This process of defunding ends once the university department or government institute becomes a reliable 'partner', i.e., one that will not object to the expropriation of local knowledge and in fact give the corporations a local cover. For example, about a decade ago South Africa's National Botanical Institute (NBI) sold the rights to develop *carte blanche* new strains from national flora to a U.S.-based company, Ball Horticultural. Similarly another South African governmental institute was involved in selling indigenous knowledge:

> The San, one of Africa's oldest tribes have used Hoodia since prehistoric times to stave off thirst and hunger for long periods of time. It was patented in 1995 after being translated into a blockbuster obesity cure, P57, with a market potential of $6 billion. The particularly disconcerting aspect of this case is that it was a governmental organisation, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), which took and patented the

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> knowledge before licensing it to Phytopharm who subsequently sub-licensed to Pfizer, with none of the projected royalties being earmarked for the San.[10]

These are not alone, many patents claimed by pharmaceutical or agricultural companies are simply plundered from African people's medical and agricultural common knowledge.

SAPs AND AFRICA IN THE INTERNATIONAL DIVISION OF LABOR

SAPs, then, were successful in de-structuring and re-adjusting many African universities so that they lost their ability to offer a coherent academic program and to produce the scientific and cultural defenses of the nation's patrimony.

SAPs also achieved one of the World Bank's grossest aims: the achievement of an epochal reduction in the investment (per student) in African universities as well as a successful application of neoliberal 'market logic' in the management of universities. In one sense, the university crisis of the 1980s and 1990s seemed to have been remarkably successful.

The economic side of the double crisis was also apparently successful from the perspective of collective capital. In the more than two decades since the first SAPs were introduced in the mid-1980s, the African countries' economic crisis triggered by structural adjustment continued unabated. Since the mid 1980s, the continent has occupied the lowest levels in the major indexes of capitalist accumulation. Sub-Saharan Africa has now 12% of the world's population, but it has 1.6% of its GDP.[11] And the international division of labour has unambiguously reinstated African countries into a colonial position, directing them, as we have seen, to be producers and exporters of minerals, agricultural products and labour-power. This is indicated by the following:

- While 3% of the world's output is agricultural, in Sub-Saharan Africa 14% of the monetary economy is comprised of agricultural commodities;

- Extractive industries in Africa are dominant from the point of view of trade. For example, '[b] etween 2000-2004 90% of Guinea's export earnings came from bauxite, alumina, gold and diamonds; copper (predominantly) and cobalt gave Zambia over 60% of its foreign trade income while a third of Ghana's earnings came from gold'.[12] The GNP growth of African economies, since the early 2000s, which the business press has ballyhooed, was largely based on the commodity bubbles for minerals and petroleum that preceded the financial crash in September 2008;

- More than one million Africans emigrate every year, many crossing the Sahara desert on foot and sailing on 'death ships' heading for Europe. Their drowned or desiccated bodies on Mediterranean beaches or the Sahara desert are a visible sign of the crisis the African youth experience with regard to their economic future.

Part of the agricultural, mineral and human wealth flowing out of Africa metabolises in the form of remittances (skimmed off by international banks and money transfer firms), rents (for leases on mines negotiated by government officials who expect a bribe from the companies they are negotiating with), and export earnings (from agricultural and mining activities that devastate the land and the health of the people). But only a miniscule part of the returning value is reinvested in the institutions in which academic knowledge is produced.

If investment 'talks', the international business' viewpoint on education is essentially the same as it was in the 1980s when the World Bank--the premier planning institution on the African continent and architect of the 'double crisis' to this day--could cavalierly assert that 'Africa had no need for universities'.

THE BANK TURNS

For all the success of the SAPs in undermining Africa's tertiary educational systems and making them compliant to its objectives, the World Bank has been forced to revise its public posture toward them. While in the 1980s, the Bank's call for drastic cuts in the academic budgets was uncompromising, it now admits that higher education is an indispensable component of 'development' even in Africa.[13] This turn in the Bank's behavior has been both ideological and financial.

The World Bank began to modify its ideology during the mid 1990s in the midst of spreading anti-SAP revolts, mounting criticism of its operations and the emergence of a new global economy, where presumably 'knowledge was outstripping material resources and physical capital as a source of wealth'.[14] As Cohen and Laporte report, by 1996 an ideological shift was underway at the Bank, under the tutelage of its new Director James Wolfensohn, arguing that 'knowledge was a powerful poverty-reduction instrument in its own right', and picturing the Bank as a 'knowledge bank', developing 'knowledge economies' in the postcolonial world.[15]

A milestone in this process was the 1998/1999 World Development Report *Knowledge for Development*, which insisted on the importance of education for competition in a world-market increasingly requiring technological sophistication and information. The document reiterates the standard praises for basic education, but notices that higher education is essential to a country becoming 'a player in global markets' or 'near the technological frontier'.[16]

By 2006, World Bank writers like Bloom, Channing, and Chan had the confidence to dismiss the skepticism of the elders of neo-liberalism, Milton and Rose Friedman, had towards the functionality of higher education for the accumulation process. They noted that:

- University enrolment rates are correlated with labour productivity growth;
- The number of scientists and engineers per capita is also associated with economic growth;
- Higher education had a strong causal impact on economic growth in France, Japan, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.[17]

Since 1996, then, the World Bank has been in advance of the anti-capitalist visionaries in asserting the potentialities of knowledge, including the need for controlled knowledge communities to help 'capitalising on local knowledge' in Africa.[18]

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Along with this ideological turn has come a financial one. The World Bank's loans to African universities continued to fall from $120 million in 1990 to about $14 million in 2000. But that was the low point, a turn around followed and lending grew to $105 million in 2008.[19]

EXPLAINING THE TURN AND THE STALEMATE

What has been the source of this change in attitude and lending towards African universities? We certainly cannot take the World Bank's explanation--new statistics and new theoretical developments--at its face value.

There are at least two conflicting factors that need to be considered: first, mounting campus revolts in Africa against structural adjustment and for increasing access to universities made the control of these institutions more tenuous; second, the very success of its neoliberal restructuring of the universities described above have made them useful sites for the exploitation of the continent's resources. As a result, African universities offered a mixture of danger and opportunity for the World Bank and the 'development' agencies.

The danger arose in the following way. The increase in fees and the decrease in investment per student dictated by SAPs were supposed to have cut the student population. But that did not happen. On the contrary, there has been a dramatic increase in university student enrolment in Sub-Sahara Africa from 2.6% in 1991 to about 5% in 2005, even though that is still the lowest regional rate on the planet. More importantly, the rate of increase in the number of students, about 8.7% a year (hence doubling every 8 years), is the highest on the planet.[20] This increase is an autonomous development, similar to the autonomous character of immigration in this period. It responds to a different logic than that of the Bank's and its client, collective capital's, and is one that they do not welcome. Just as immigration is rooted in struggles both in the 'receiving' and 'sending' countries, so too the rising student population has its source in the struggles that students make in the universities and the efforts their extended families make in their home territories.[21]

Thus, a stalemate has been created--i.e., an ever-increasing university enrolment demanded by African students faces a SAP inspired ever-decreasing education investment per student. Neither side seems to be able to break out of this untenable conjunction.

In response to the situation, the World Bank thunders in its bank-speak:

> Over the past two decades, tertiary enrollments have generally increased far more quickly than tertiary budgets...But at the same time, tertiary public financing, which averaged US$6,800 per student annually in 1980, dropped to just US$981 in 2005 for 33 low-income African countries.[22]

And again: 'Too rapid an increase in enrollments, as has happened in the recent past, had eroded quality and is undermining the contribution of tertiary education to growth'.[23] The Bank's anxiety about the resulting Stalemate, however, is obvious:

> The future...promises no immediate relief from these pressures as a rising tide of graduates from basic education is now jostling for entry into secondary education, and will soon be banging on the doors of tertiary institutions. Left unchecked, a continuation of current trends will produce a further tripling of tertiary enrollments by 2020. Enrollments will be fueled by record numbers of youth as a demographic "bulge" works its way through the SSA education system in the decade ahead. The interplay of these two factors will generate intense social pressure for access to higher levels of education, which most elected politicians within Africa's relative new democracies will find impossible to ignore.[24]

In other words, African students value university education enough to risk death or injury in demonstration after demonstration against cuts in subsidies and increases in tuition fees. Families have also devoted an increasing share of their resources to give their children access to university education. For the increasing cost of university education in Africa is being borne by a transfer of wealth from the family and/or the village community sponsoring the student to the university and the state. This transfer is based on the student's family's/village's hope that in the future the knowledge worker so produced will reverse the direction of the value flow. In other words, the African land commons has been induced to transfer value to knowledge-worker production in this deal, showing the darker side of the proverb made famous by Hillary Clinton, 'It takes a village to raise a child'.

The value transfer from land to tertiary institutions is not unique to Africa. It is a global phenomenon. In India, for example, information technology training institutes get their profits from tuition fees paid by those who want to get IT jobs. The aspirants pay their tuition fees from the agricultural surpluses of their families' farms or from their wives' dowries. One observer estimates that '25% of agricultural surpluses in villages he studied was invested in higher education', and that '[p]arents eager to marry off their daughters contribute to the flow of agricultural surplus from the villages to the cities, and enable the grooms to pursue the IT education that they hope will turn their dreams into reality'.[25]

However, Africa is not India, and even the World Bank recognises that family and governmental investment in higher education in Africa is reaching its limits.[26]

On the other side, contemporary African universities are attractive to the World Bank, the NGOs, and international development agencies and corporations. Certainly, they hardly resemble the institutions the Bank had set out to restructure in the 1980s. Much academic activity is now under the control of World Bank veterans, NGOers or staff from foreign universities, mostly from North America and Europe, who have been the main beneficiaries of the change. African universities and their staff are also implicated in much consultancy work for foreign companies as well. Consequently, there is a desire within the Bank to keep the compliant universities running in order to preserve these adjusted zones of knowledge production.

Nevertheless, the prospects for Africa's economic 'development' in the 'knowledge economy' hardly justify the World Bank's loans to African universities.

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THE CONTRADICTION

These loans reveal a glaring flaw in the World Bank's logic.[27] For the focus of capitalist production in Africa is still largely extractive, i.e., Africans' knowledge is not being valorised in Africa. The World Bank's earlier higher education planning in the 1980s--the elimination of many universities, departments and programs, the reduction of access to university education and an emphasis on primary education--was consistent with the role that Africans were to play in the international division of labour (in its eyes). There is now a contradiction in the World Bank's policy between the still unchanged role of Africans in Africa in the international division of labour and the ideology of the 'knowledge economy' that it is dangling before African students, parents and politicians. The main economic change in 21st century Africa has been 'a new Scramble for Africa' involving expanding mineral and hydrocarbon extraction and the sell-off of huge tracts of land to foreign investors who plan to use the land for bio-fuel projects and industrial agriculture.[28] This 'scramble' is often sanctioned by mining codes and land use policies that the World Bank has drafted.[29] SAPs have sedimented privatisation policies guaranteeing that the African states charge corporations and investors a pittance for rent of mines. This intensified extraction of crops, minerals, and labour power--exemplified in the coltan mining in the Congo (where miners dig the mineral out with their hands) or the oil extraction in sci-fi like platforms in Gulf of Benin where hardly an African worker can be found--is not the basis for an economy integrating cognitive labour power in African production. The World Bank recognises this contradiction:

> Rapid enrollment expansion channeled students disproportionately into the less expensive "soft" disciplines and siphoned off research funding to cover the costs of more students. In 2004, just 28 percent of tertiary students were enrolled in science and technology fields...[Tertiary institutions] have too often redesigned curricula and launched new academic programs without adequate input from employers on the labour market performance of graduates, creating a "disconnect" between the supply and demand for high-level skills.[30]

In Bank-speak this means that there are still too many African university students studying in unprofitable ways not sanctioned by domestic or foreign capitalists. Instead of preparing to become useful employees for the extraction industries in this century's 'scramble', 47% of the university students graduate in humanities and social sciences, and only 18% graduate in disciplines that might be directly useful to the extraction industries.[31] By increasing its lending to African universities since 2000, the Bank has tried to keep itself engaged with them and steer them toward a more 'productive' policy, i.e., reducing student numbers, training more scientific and technical workers, eliminating the 'soft' disciplines and in general disciplining the disciplines. But it is not too sanguine about the results. World Bankers fear that the Stalemate in African universities is producing a displaced, unemployed, increasingly proletarianised, and potentially revolutionary class of 'knowledge workers' (a.k.a. in classical sociological jargon, 'a revolutionary intelligentsia').

The ingredients for such a development are there. Graduate unemployment is high: in 9 out of 23 countries with available labour market data, graduate unemployment rates exceed 20%.[32] But future graduates still are coming to universities at an unprecedented rate and African governments are unwilling or unable to stop them. Why should this youth not demand a place in the university, since they have been told--by the World Bank among others--that they and their nation need to be part of the global knowledge economy or else they are doomed?

A decade ago, one of us pointed out the political processes that this Stalemate produced.[33] Structural adjustment has definitely ended the era where (a) the university graduate could find guaranteed employment in the state or in indigenised corporations and (b) the period of student life was a privileged one. Only a World Bank bureaucrat could be cynical enough to describe contemporary African universities as comfortable places where the children of the elite congregate. CAFA's two-decade long chronology of student struggle marking the hundreds killed, the thousands injured and the tens of thousands arrested in anti-SAP protests is evidence that student life in Africa is arduous and dangerous.[34] But it is also a training ground for many student militants who become inured to conflict with authorities. When they are 'banging on the doors of tertiary institutions' from both the inside and the outside, the World Bank, for one, hears them.

There are many possible exits from the Stalemate. In some campuses of Nigeria it has led to the development of armed student gangs or 'cults' whose members become mercenaries for politicians in exchange for protection and money.[35] In others, as in South Africa, the student movement that was shaped in the apartheid era went into an apparent decline with the end of apartheid but reappeared in new forms based on ethnic identities. As M. C. Dawson writes:

> while the South African Student Congress is the dominant organization in the higher education sector, there is a distance between the organization and the majority of ordinary students....In this context it is plausible that cultural organizations have stepped in to deal with questions of alienation among students.[36]

Across the African campuses there has also been a religious revival, of both the Christian or Islamic varieties. But the Stalemate can also lead to an increased re-composition of the African working class and the creation of alliances among its different sectors, potentially the most explosive being that of students and slum and shack dwellers.

A striking example of this re-composition has been the alliance between some of the faculty and students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban and *Abahlali baseMjondolo*, an organisation that has grown in one of the shack settlements proliferating in the city. *Abahlali's* aim is to prevent the police and henchmen of the local landlords from destroying their shacks and to obtain some amenities for shack dwellers. As S'Bu Zikode, one of *Abahlali's* leaders and a former university student, modestly writes, '[Our movement] will finish its job when land and housing, electricity and basic services have been won and poverty eliminated'.[37]

What is remarkable about this movement is its insistence on the intellectual character of its struggle. *Abahlali* supporters value the epistemological character of the struggle of 'the poor'. Militants bring to demonstrations signs on which they call themselves 'The University of *Abahlali baseMjondolo*', as they see their struggle as the foundation of their education.[38]

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The movement has thus provided an often-contentious bridge to the academic world, especially the UKZN, and worked closely with teachers and researchers, creating a complex mix of nomadic intellectuals, institutional academics and students super-positioned between them. The World Bank and African governments fear the revolutionary potential of such a mix, especially if this connection will become a model for the future in Africa universities, as it becomes clear that neither religion nor ethnicity can end pauperisation.

Not surprisingly then on September 29th, 2009 the ANC launched a murderous attack against a meeting of the *Abahlai* leading to the slaughter of its militants and imprisonment of its leaders.[39] One reason why *Abahlali* was a target of attack is due to connections it builds between the 'university of the streets' and the streets of the university, a connection that can unleash tremendous powers. These attacks, however, are one more sign that the Stalemate is breaking down.

It is also important to add that an exit from the Stalemate--emigration--is now put in jeopardy by the world economic crisis. Until recently, about 10% of African university graduates on average have emigrated. Students constitute about one-third of the Sub-Sahara Africa's net emigration.[40] In the case of some professions (doctors and nurses) and countries, the 'brain drain' is even higher:

> Almost half [of Ghana's] university graduates have emigrated. And the result? Ghana now has one doctor for every 16,129 people...Of Ghana's medical graduates between 1985 and 1994, half left the country within five years of graduating. Three-quarters had gone within 10 years.[41]

Though a net economic loss for African governments, emigration has been a 'safety valve' for individuals. However, if anti-immigration policies will raise the cost and danger of emigration to Europe and North America, Africa will face a critical mass of trained knowledge workers without wages or prospects.

HOISTED ON ITS OWN PETARD

All signs point to the breakdown of the Stalemate in the context of the present 'double crisis' of the African university system. The struggle of African students to gain access to university education has forced the World Bank to offer a knowledge 'deal' to the African youth that will have explosive consequences. This is an IT variant of enlightenment discourse, or Diderot with a computer. But enlightenment discourse, as the French revolutionary bourgeoisie discovered, can become incendiary in the hands of those for whom it was not meant, e.g., the Haitian slaves after 1789.[42] By endorsing the 'productivity' of university education in Africa (with all its caveats) the Bank now must face the fact that its rhetoric amplifies the 'out of control' demand for education.

It is easy to see why the World Bank began to take up the cognitive capitalist approach in the mid-1990s. There clearly were changed conditions of production involving the new Turing machines, but it also provided a new ideological justification for the differential 'wealth of nations'. Why, for example, is the U.S. near the top of the ladder and Zambia near the bottom? As long as constant capital was the explanation for the wealth hierarchy, the response from Third Worldist and Marxist critics of capitalism was that U.S. capital's accumulation was expropriated (directly in the form of primitive accumulation or through more subtle, but equally devastating unequal exchanges) from colonised nations and regions. The U.S. was on top because Zambia's copper is bought through unequal exchange, critics argued. Fela's 'ITT, International Thief Thief' was the political slogan that grew out of this analysis, and the World Bankers had to face accusations from anti-IMF/World Bank rioters, rebels and insurrectionaries that they were imperialists using money not bullets to exploit country after country throughout South America and Africa.

But once knowledge becomes the decisive 'factor of production' and the key to success in the world market then the explanation for wealth inequalities devolve into knowledge inequalities. The U.S. is on top and Zambia is on the bottom because U.S. knowledge workers know more than Zambian knowledge workers. It is as simple as that. Ignorance is not bliss in this economic equation. Human capital, social capital, cognitive capital and other 'soft' forms of capital seem to be excellent ways to undermine anti-imperialist politics, for they explain African people's poverty as a self-inflicted epistemological failure. Consider the following passage (with its telltale ambiguous grammar):

> it is only through the application of knowledge that African countries will be able to cope with potentially crippling threats from prevalent diseases, [from?] expanding youthful and urbanizing populations, and [from?] impending climate change. Africa's stock of human capital with secondary- and tertiary-level skills is comparatively small. Its quality is highly variable.[43]

Who is stopping Africans from 'applying knowledge'? Inevitably, the answer has a self-accusatory logic: themselves.

But the World Bank's desire to re-establish control over Africa's universities under the rubric of 'knowledge' has been bought at a high cost. By offering the hope for an African 'knowledge economy' in the face of the evident intensification of the scramble for Africa, the Bank is lending to the very institutions that are operating in ways that are contrary to its core imperative. 'Cognitive capital' rhetoric is literally hoisting the Bank by its own petard through creating the conditions for the collapse of the Stalemate, e.g., through increasing the investment per student.

NOTES

*Nota Bene
Unless noted otherwise, the reference group for the statistics in this paper is the set of countries in a region called "Sub-Saharan Africa."

[1] Edu-factory Collective, *Towards,* 3.

[2] Federici, Caffentzis and Alidou, *A thousand flowers.*

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[3] Caffentzis, *The world bank*, 14; and Federici, *The recolonization*, 19-23.

[4] Pithouse, *Introduction*, xix-xx.

[5] Mamdani, *Scholars*, 119.

[6] Barchiesi, *Lean and very mean*, 68-70.

[7] Pithouse, *Introduction*, xix.

[8] See for Japan: Ozawa, *Domination*, 181-190.

[9] Tripp, *Invisible hands*, 2003-2016.

[10] Sahai, Parithran, and Barpujari, *Biopiracy*, 44.

[11] World Bank, *Accelerating catch-up.*

[12] Tamufor, *Need to revise*, 16.

[13] World Bank, *Accelerating Catch-Up.*

[14] Cohen and Laporte, *The evolution.*

[15] Cohen and Laporte, *The evolution.*

[16] World Bank, *World development report*, 42.

[17] Bloom, Canning and Chan, *Higher education*, 18.

[18] Oettle and Koelle, *Capitalising*.

[19] World Bank. *Accelerating Catch-Up*, 117.

[20] World Bank. *Accelerating Catch-Up*, 46.

[21] Federici, Caffentzis and Alidou, *A thousand flowers.*

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