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# A Philanthropic approach in not-for-profit Higher Education Institutions in Africa: The case of Omdurman Ahlia University, Sudan

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## **Abstract**

*The paper describes the role and purpose of higher education with emphasis on the Private Universities and their role in community engagement .A flashback into the development of higher education in the Sudan as an example of the contribution of philanthropic civil education in the country is indicated with a SWOT analysis of the current situation and the suggested policies to develop that .The case of Omdurman Ahila University as non- government , not-for profit institute which gained by its noble goals a distinction in community service is pointed .*

## **Introduction**

It is a truth universally acknowledged that in higher education a prime role of the universities is the community service together with the other academic functions of teaching learning and research. Badat (2009) referred to a quotation by Arthur Levine (2000) to an earlier report (The Yale report of 1828) answering whether the needs of a changing society required either major or minor changes in higher education the report concluded that it had asked the wrong question.

The right question was “What is the purpose of higher education?” Indeed as Levine suggested that faced with society in motion we must actively pursue answers if our colleges and universities are to retain their validity.

### **The Purpose and Role of Higher Education Institutes**

Higher education institutes are endowed with the production and dissemination of knowledge. Production of knowledge is attained by research on the inherited already available knowledge or on the challenges that face the community. Both production and dissemination of knowledge dictates the training of students to be graduated on certain qualities. The task force on Higher Education and Society (2000) depicts those graduates

" can think effectively and critically "

" have achieved depth in some field of knowledge"

" have a critical appreciation of the ways in which we gain

knowledge and understanding of the universe, of society and of ourselves"

" have a knowledge of other cultures and other times"

" be able to make decisions based on reference to the wider world and to the historical forces that have shaped it"

" have some understanding of and experience in thinking systematically about moral and ethical problems.

Russel Botman (2011) in discussing the building of new values stated that universities producing graduates for the "public good "is not a new notion as was stated by Walker (2010). Also graduate attributes were seen to go beyond the technical knowledge (Van Schalkyk *et al* 2010) .The attributes also include qualities that prepare graduates as agents for the "social good" .

### **Universities and community engagement**

Badat (2009) emphasized the increasingly accepted role of universities as to undertake community engagement. Community engagement generally describes the mechanism of integration of the university role of teaching and research in the society. Community engagement as seen by Badat (2009) necessitates the interaction of related and intersecting activities with their intersection constituting the specific activity of service –learning.

Professor Russel Botman states that in Stellenbosch University in South Africa they prefer the term "community interaction" (Botman 2011). In this context community engagement emphasizes the reciprocity between university and community and it provides an active partnership between university and the community thus sharing scientific knowledge to the benefit of the community. This undoubtedly has its implication on the syllabi and curriculum of certain disciplines or fields taught or put forward as research programmes of the universities.

## **Private Universities in Africa and Community Service**

A comprehensive list of private universities in Africa and their distribution was well documented in the study carried out by the Association of African Universities (2000). However since then the proportion of private universities in Africa is rising very sharply. Very recently Professor Olugbermiro Jegede in a panel discussion in New York (2012) revealed that Africa today has 800 universities and more than 1.500 tertiary, institutions .He pointed out that in 1960 there were 7 private universities in Africa. The number rose to 27 by 1990, and student enrolment in private higher education accounted for 22% of the total enrolment .The statistics produced by Professor Jegede was as follows:

Country	Public University	Private University
Uganda	7	27
Somalia	-	40
Ethiopia	22	>30
South Africa	2	87
Ghana	6	42
Nigeria	36(Federal) 37(State)	45

It is evident that the number of private universities in Africa is likely to outstrip public institutions within the coming years (Jegede 2012)

### **Ownership of private institution in higher education**

Varghese (2004) in an analysis of ownership patterns of private institutions in African countries revealed the following:

1. Multinationals
2. In collaboration with foreign institutions.
3. Foreign collaborations established through the government or public universities.
4. Religious organizations.
5. Private firms established by nationals.
6. In collaboration within institutions of the same country.
7. Combination of more than one of the above.

### **Courses offered, Teaching staff and Student Performance in Private Institute**

The courses offered by the private institutions depends on the orientation of institution , but generally these institution incline to the market friendly courses and focus on community and existing market needs. The private institutions rely on the part-time teachers and a limited number of full-time staff.

Although student enrolling in private institutes are generally those who did not get admission to public universities due to their low level of academic profile yet their academic performance in many instances is better than those of public universities. In private institutions the graduation rate is high and the dropout rate is low. The employability of the private institutions graduates is also high.

Private universities tend to out-weigh in standards and excellence the public institutes.

### **Financing the private institutions**

Unlike public universities which receive their funding primarily from the government the private universities in Africa derive their funding mainly from the student fees. All of their expenditure is met from the student fees and hence the total income and the budget of expenditure depends on the numbers of students and the level of fees levied which varies according to the type of institution. Fees levied are higher for the for-profit institute than that for the not-for-profit institute. A clear example is shown in Table (1) which compares the not-for-profit Omdurman Ahlia University (Sudan) with the other private for-profit universities in the country. Philanthropy, as will be discussed below plays a great role in the financing of the not-for-profit institutions.

### **Philanthropy of Community**

Philanthropy is defined as love for humankind. ("philos" in Greek means loving and " anthropos" means humankind) and reference to that is found in all religions .An epic example is the "Zakat" or giving in Islam which is a form of individual religious philanthropy. Other forms of philanthropy include community – based philanthropy and corporate philanthropy. True philanthropy is helping someone to become self-sufficient and in practice it honours the giving of time, talent and treasure.(Mac Legerton *et al* 2009).

The basic three sectors in modern economy are the state, the private sector and the civil society. In that context higher education is represented in these sectors, and in which case the civil society competence is to promote the choice of citizen to noble causes. All forms of philanthropy mentioned above share the elements of collective effort and solidarity in order to fulfill the social purpose of serving the community.

### **A Flash back into Higher education in the Sudan**

In 1898 Lord Kitchener in the aftermath of invasion of Sudan and conquering the Mahdist State, proposed founding a college in memory of General Gardon .Funds for proposed college were raised by the private subscription and the plans for the building were drawn. The new college, named the Gordon Memorial College, was officially opened in 1902, although it was not until 1903 that buildings were completed and the first batch of primary level students were admitted. The College however, was never intended to be solely a primary school. A secondary stratum was added in 1905 for the purpose of training assistant engineers and land surveyors, and in 1906 a four year course for the training of primary school teachers was established.

In 1905 Sir Henry Welcome donated a fully equipped laboratory for bacteriological analysis, thus began the fruitful association between Khartoum and the Welcome Research Laboratories, London. In 1924, the College developed into a vocational secondary school concentrating on teaching following disciplines: Sharia, Engineering,



Teaching, Training, Clerical Work, Accounting and Science. In the same year Kitchener School of Medicine was established. The year 1936 witnessed the beginning of higher education in the Sudan with the establishment of the School of Law. By 1940 the College included schools of Agriculture, Arts, Law, Science, Engineering and Veterinary Science, Each School was attached to the government department in which the graduates would be expected to work.

In January 1945, all these schools were brought under one administration in a special arrangement with the University of London. The College was upgraded in 1951 to become Khartoum University College. In the same year Kitchener School of Medicine was incorporated in the University College. The University of London set the examinations and awarded the degrees. The outstanding students were awarded bachelor degrees from the University of London and the rest obtained the college diplomas. The present University of Khartoum is result of natural transformation of the University College of Khartoum when the country became independent in 1956. The bill giving full University status to the College was passed by Parliament on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1956, since then, the University witnessed considerable expansion.

That was followed in the seventies by the establishment of University of Cairo Branch in Khartoum (Now the Nilein University). Omdurman Islamic University, University of Gezira, University of Juba. In the early sixties other higher education

institutes like Khartoum Technical Institute (Now the Sudan University of Science and Technology) and other post secondary school institutes and colleges in various disciplines of knowledge and were established. The nineties of the last century witnessed a boom in establishing universities in the Sudan more than twenty universities came into existence and almost all of the 26 states of the country had a public university. Private Universities were also founded.

### **The Present Situation**

At present there are forty (40) universities 33 of which are public and 7 belong to civil society (private) together with 48 civil colleges and 18 Technical colleges. It is noticeable that all private universities are located in Khartoum. The numbers of students enrolled in these institutes are 500.000 representing 61% of those who passed the Sudan Secondary School Certificate. Of these 62% enroll from the general admission 11% are private candidates 18% affiliated and 6% others. The students in high education represent 10% of the population in the age (17-23 years) who are eligible for higher education. Seventy nine per cent (79%) go for B.Sc. While 21% of these enroll for Diplomas .Female students are 51% of the total student population.

### **A SWOT Analysis of the current situation of Higher education in the Sudan**

#### **Points of Strength**

1. Perhaps the spread of the higher education institutes all over the country helped to a great extent the rural communities to get an opportunity to get education and a close contact of these institutes with the society.
2. The diversification of methods of delivery of knowledge for example through the Open University and adult education.
3. The establishment of the Technical colleges in the different states universities enforced the role of those universities towards community service thus supporting the society needs.
4. There is an encouragement attitude of the private and civil society organizations to take an active role and share the responsibility of those institutes with the public sector.
5. The availability of a good number of academic staff, sometime from the wide spread research institutes supports the function of the university.
6. The availability of a good information technology networks helps connecting these institutes.

### **Point of weakness**

1. The inability of the institutes to orient effectively the students with the actual necessary skills needed for the market jobs created a gap between these various components (university, market and the student).
2. There is a slow operation in revising and periodical revisits of the curriculum and the traditional methods of teaching.

3. The low salaries of the academic staff as compared to other sector in the country and the lack training for the academic staff.
4. The limited or no funds for research and facilities.
5. The traditional management and administration of the high education, the poor coordination and the lack of strategic planning for the establishment of new public or private institutions. The lack of applying the criteria for evaluation, transparency and accountability in some institutes.

### **Opportunities for promotion of the higher education institutes**

1. The very high understanding, by the government and the executive authorities of the great role of the higher education as a pivotal stance for the change of the social, economical and development change in the country and their willingness to support this.
2. The high number of students applying for admission to higher education despite the high unemployment rate and lack of jobs for graduates.
3. The rapid development of the country in information technology and communication.
4. The high possibility of gaining support from abroad (countries and organization) in terms of technical cooperation and education facilities and training.

## **The Possible Threats**

1. The political pressure to the country from outside which disturbs the stability of the country and thus disturbs the strategic policies set for higher education.
2. The low fund available to the higher education institutes specially those in the rural areas.
3. Unemployment of graduated which sets back investment in higher education.
4. The "brain drain" of the highly qualified academic staff to other countries for a better self satisfying environment.

## **Policies required to develop the higher education sector**

According the above SWOT analysis of the current situation in higher education in Sudan (public or private institutions) it is pertinent to implement policies that help to promote positively to an effective role towards the set goals and missions. The following suggestions could be considered.

1. It is important to diversify the methods of education in order to support a long life learning and distribution of science and knowledge for all society members.
2. It is time to revise the policy of admission of students to higher institutions to attain equilibrium between the option and desire of the candidate and the actual need of the community development.

3. There is a need for training and upgrading the academic and technical staff to establish a better academic environment for research and learning.
4. The escalating changes in the daily need of the community dictates a revision and upgrading of the curricula set forth by the different institutions.
5. The application of quality assurance to the current university programmes as is adopted internationally is vital.
6. There is a need to direct the postgraduate studies and the research to areas of commitment to the national development policies and equally the results of the research to be available for application by the community.
7. There should be a commitment by the governing authorities to avail the funds and other facilities required by the universities.
8. Lastly the private sector as it benefits from the product of higher education whether in terms of the products of research or the human resource as trained personnel should be encouraged to support the higher institutions and should on the other hand find more room for representation in the various councils and committees or councils of the universities.

## **Omdurman Ahlia University: Philanthropy and the "Order of Accomplishment"**

Aware of the difficulties encountered by secondary school leavers who were qualified to pursue their graduate studies but were prohibited by the limited number of seats in higher education institute, a group of honorable scholar, educationalists and prominent citizens of Omdurman City met to discuss the issue. After a series of meetings the decision was made; to establish a non-governmental, civil society, national higher education institute in Omdurman, the city that has the long history and a well recognized heritage in non-government philanthropic education in the Sudan

In November 1986 the college was established and started with the first batch of 250 students in seven distinct programmes (Arts& Science, Economics and Administrative Sciences, Health Sciences (Medical Laboratory Sciences), Interior design, Environmental Sciences, Computer Sciences and Continuous education. The programmes were distinct and appealing and due to their unavailability elsewhere attracted a greater number of students then and till now.

In 1995 the college was officially recognized as a full-fledge university as a non-government civil society institute. Now the 120,000 m<sup>2</sup> campus holds eight faculties

- **Faculty of Applied Sciences and Computer.**

This comprises two departments:

1. Department of Applied physics & Mathematics.
2. Department of Computer Sciences.

- **Faculty of Design.**

This comprises three departments:

1. Interior Design.
2. Industrial Design.
3. Graphic Design.

- **Faculty of Arts.**

This comprises six departments:

1. Arabic language.
2. English language.
3. French language.
4. Library & Information Sciences.
5. Communication Sciences.
6. History & Civilization.

- **Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences.**

This comprises five departments:

1. Economics.
2. Business Administration.
3. Accounting (ACC).
4. Banking and Insurance.
5. Executive Secretariat & Office Management.



- **Faculty of Engineering and Architecture.**

This comprises two departments:

1. Electrical & Electronics. This comprises three specializations (Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering and Communication Engineering).
2. Architecture. This comprises two specializations (Design and Construction Management).

- **Faculty of Environmental Sciences.**

This comprises two departments:

1. Environmental Technology.
2. Environmental Management.

- **Faculty of Health Sciences (Medical Laboratory Science).**

This comprises five disciplines:

1. Clinical Chemistry.
2. Microbiology.
3. Parasitology and medical Entomology.
4. Histopathology
5. Haematology.

- **Faculty of Human and Technological Development.**

This comprises two departments:

1. Intermediate Diploma Department.
2. Department of Continuous Education. And

### **Three Research Centers:**

- **Centre for Sudanese Studies.** (Mohammed Omer Bashir Centre (M.O.B):

A focus institution for conducting studies and research that address various aspects of Sudanese history, heritage, literature, politics, economics, education,....etc.

- **Centre for Research in Indigenous Sudanese Languages and Vernaculars.** (Aun El-Sharief Gasim Centre):

Conducting statistical studies and classification of languages and dialects

- **Alternative energy and Sustainable Development Centre.**

For research on alternative energy technology (solar, biofuels...etc.) and their applications to ensure sustainable development

### **Other Major Supporting Institutions include:**

1. Deanship of Students.

This is responsible for the welfare of the students to their cultural, sport, health and social activities.

2. The Deanship of Libraries.

3. The Secretariat of Academic Affairs.
4. The Secretariat of Graduate Studies & Scientific Research.
5. The External & Public Relations Department.

The detailed curricula, course contents objectives, mission and goals of the Faculties and the Research Centres together with the University institutional structure and committees are found in the prospectus of the University at the website *oau.edu.sd*. Community outreach to the different parts of the country in urban and rural areas by staff student trekking convoys is an integral part of the social, environment and medical programmes. The university campus now holds over twelve thousand students. During the period 1988-2010 34.554 students were graduated (Table 2).

It is worth mentioning here that all the infrastructure and premises that reside these faculties and centers (lecture halls, lecture rooms, laboratories, staff offices, libraries and administration buildings ...) were built by donations from individuals to whom the university is greatly, morally and ethically indebted. Not only that but even the personal libraries, some of them are found nowhere in national or other archives are donated to the University.

Figure (1) shows the University Organization Chart and Institutional Structure. According to the University Laws and Regulations, the University governing bodies are:

1. The Founders council.
2. The Board of Trustees.

3. The University Council.
4. The Academic Council.
5. Financial Administrative Committees.

In carrying out its activities the university is assisted by number of standing committees. These include:

- Deans Committee
- Admission Committee
- Examination Committee
- Fees and Grants Committee
- Staff Promotion Committee
- Appointment Committee
- Employees Affairs Committee

**Academic and administrative Staff:**

Academic staff	190
Administrative staff	570

It is worth mentioning also that funds are raised, donated by individuals or organization to help the needy students to partially pay their tuition fees a student Grant Committee supervises that with a set criteria to help students, who lost their parents, students whose brothers or sisters also study in the university. Grants also go for students who excel in performance and students whose parents are members of the university academic or administrative staff.

The uniqueness of the University programmes, the low tuition fees paid by the students (Table 1) and the highly qualified permanent and part-time academic staff and the collaborative atmosphere in administering the campus creates a favorable attracting environment in the university. Next year the university is launching a programme for Medical Sciences based on the student, participatory, Integrated, community and elective system (SPICES). This will also add to the lofty goals of community interaction and services.

## **Epilogue**

With profound sincerity , it remains to state that Omdurman Ahlia University since its start has embarked on a path of relevance which situated it firmly within the Higher Education Community in the country to serve its purpose as an outstanding non-government and not-for- profit civil institute of the people and for the people.

In November 2011 the University grandly celebrated its Silver Jubilee. In that occasion the University was privileged by the President of the Republic to attain the "Order of Accomplishment" as the first and sole university in the country to achieve that honor.

*"Of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you"*

*Israa: 85.....*

*Holy Quraan*

## The University Organizational Chart

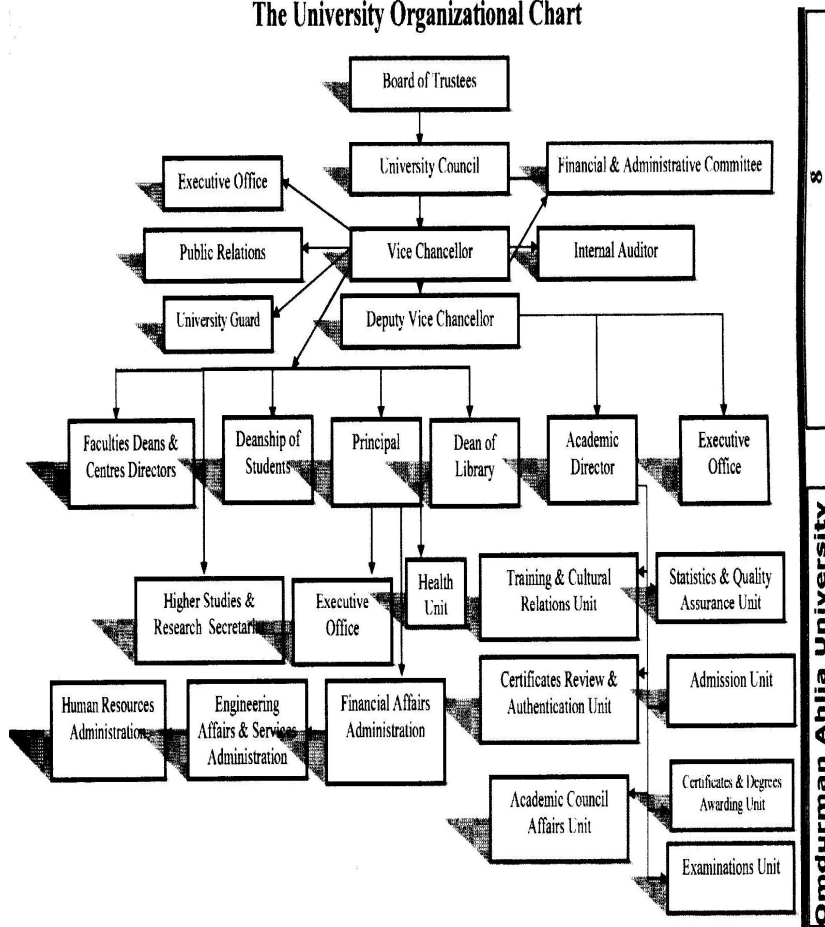


Table 1: Tuition fees to the Degree of B.Sc. in some programmes at selected Public and Private Universities in Sudan for the year 2012-2013

The fees are in Sudanese Pounds. The Figures between bracket ( ) are multipliers (Folds) as compared to Omdurman Ahlia University.

<u>University Programme</u>	Omdurman Ahlia univ. <b>Philanthropic</b>	Rabat <b>Public</b>	Karari <b>Public</b>	Ahfad <b>Private</b>	International Sudan <b>Public</b>	Science & Technology <b>Private</b>	Medical Science Technology <b>Private</b>	Future <b>Private</b>	Mugtarbeen <b>Public</b>
Economics & Administrative Sciences	2000 (1)	5000 (2.5)	2000 (1)	4000 (2)	4000 (2)	3800 (1.9)	12000 (6.0)		3000 (1.5)
Medical Laboratory Sciences	5500 (1)	8000 (1.4)	6000 (1.09)		7000 (1.27)	6900 (1.25)	8000 (1.45)		
Electrical Engineering ( Power)	4500 (1)		7000 (1.55)			6900 (1.53)			8000 (1.77)
Computer Science	2500 (1)	4000 (1.60)				3000 (1.20)		6000 (2.40)	
Communication Engineering	4,500 (1)					8500 (1.88)	8500 (1.88)	11070 2.46	8000 (1.77)
◉Architecture	4,500 (1)	10000 (2.22)						10630 (2.36)	

Table 2: Numbers of Graduate Students Omdurman Ahlia University during the Period 1988/ 1989 – 2009/201

Year / Faculty	Economics & Administrative Sciences	Arts	Health Science (Medical Laboratory Sciences)	Engineering & Arch.	Design	Applied Science & Computer	Environmental Sciences	Human and Technological Development
1988/1989	37							22
1989/1990	154	73	24		13			96
1990/1991	127	120	22		16	14	17	54
1991/1992	147	126	58		20	14	20	81
1992/1993	292	201	50			18	36	323
1993/1994	343	230	70		13	45	113	324
1994/1995	458	435	186		25	64	95	2146
1995/1996	1169	551	172		44	95	109	1873
1996/1997	1028	409	297		15	82	15	1365
1997/1998	945	303	128		37	180	80	680
1998/1999	941	352	77		33	150	93	595
1999/2000	778	355	70		19	104	63	429
2000/2001	894	326	115		22	132	33	302
2001/2002	688	133	114		32	63	78	286
2002/2003	719	324	85	19	17	59	12	137
2003/2004	740	478	72	45	31	95	30	274
2004/2005	972	478	100	28	19	93	31	429
2005/2006	509	394	22	11	25	89	18	302
2006/2007	514	201	110	9	23	66	14	286
2007/2008	390	205	129	34	8	51	40	137
2008/ 2009	422	117	98	26	24	72	11	274
2009/2010	370	149	136	19	23	76	13	274
Total	12637	5960	2135	191	459	1562	921	10689



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