Next Generation Scholars: Addressing the Challenge of Retention in Academic Institutions in Africa

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About the Author

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Introduction

The topic "Next Generation Scholars: Addressing the Challenge of Retention in Academic Institutions in Africa" is an important one. I was hoping to be able to find a great deal of information about it. But I was quite amazed at how little has been written about it.

In the absence of a body of information on central elements of the topic I decided to range unrestrained in tackling the topic.

First, I am of the view that the challenge to retention is fairly well known and can be summed up in the following statement: Most African academic institutions, except some of those in South Africa, lack sufficient resources to provide the same level of high quality facilities for offices, libraries, classrooms and laboratories, salaries and benefit packages, funds for post doctoral and general research, publishing conferences and travel as those provided by better resourced institutions elsewhere in the world.

If adequate amounts of resources became available and African academic institutions were able to provide adequately to all the needs outlined above, then retention of next generation scholars in Africa would most probably proceed quite smoothly.

Unfortunately, and I think I can state this without fear of being contradicted, few if any African academic institutions outside South Africa, are going to be in a position to find and provide adequate resources for much of its work in the short or medium term. Consequently African academic institutions must continue to work on retaining next generation scholars under an enduring state of severe famine of all manner of resources.

Therefore, this presentation attempts to answer the following question: Well aware of the critical resource challenges that exist, how should training prepare next generation scholars to function productively in resource starved environments so that they are retained to become committed leaders and custodians of authentic knowledge systems in Africa?

Origins of the Concept of Next Generation Academics or Scholars

I have participated in discussions on next generation academics held from 2000 by several US private philanthropic foundations under the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA)[1].

The partnership emerged after each foundation through its grant making in Africa noted that after a quarter of a century of stagnation due to being starved of financial and human resources, and due to undergoing destructive political and policy transformations, there were several African academic institutions that were 'on the move' attempting to transform themselves into centers of excellence in research and teaching and relying mostly on internally generated resources to fund the process.

It is important to note that many of these universities had been excellent institutions in the 1950s, 1960s and in the early 1970s. Craig Calhoun (2010) has described these universities as follows: *"Before the destructive transformations during the 1970s and 1980s, a number of African academic institutions played crucial roles in intellectual developments including the development of lines of intellectual inquiry and pursuits that were adopted in the North, in Europe and in the USA"[2].*

One major barrier to the new process of self transformation was that the majority of academics in these institutions were either of retirement age or would retire within the next 10 or so years. Yet there were few emerging scholars in the pipeline that would replace them and train new batches of academics. Notably, three generations of academics produced between 1970 and 2000 had contributed to the brain drain from the African continent. There was therefore, a critical need to train and put in these institutions a new generation of academics that would take the baton from the older generation of academics.

The major issue then became how best train the new generation of scholars so that they would continue to pursue the major transformation processes that almost all African academic institutions need in order to be become productive research and teaching centers of excellence in the 21st century.

Fortunately for the PHEA several innovative postgraduate training programs were already on the ground including: the African Economic Research Centre (AERC)[3] training in economics;

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[1] http://www.foundations-partenrship.org

[2] Craig Calhoun, contribution during a meeting organized by the Carnegie Corporation of New York on "Developing and retaining the next generation of African academics: Excellence, Retention and Sustainability". 15-17 November, 2010, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya

[3] http://www.aercafrica.org

the African Population, Health Research Centre (APHRC)[4] training in population, demography and health; training in Science, Humanities, Engineering through the (USHEPiA)[5] network of 8 universities based at the University of Cape Town; and the Regional Universities Forum (RUFORUM) training in agriculture coordinated from Makerere.

The hallmark of these programs is that they give the student an excellent grounding in the academic discipline and also attempt to ensure that she is well grounded in the skills of research, communication, scholarly writing and publication.

In summary, next generation academics are scholars that have done their undergraduate work under difficult and resource deprived circumstances existing in African academic institutions that are striving to transform themselves. Some have carried out their masters or PhD studies in their home universities under sponsorship either by the PHEA or other agencies. Others have had an opportunity to pursue a masters or a PhD in external universities sponsored either by networks such as ALC or by a variety of other organizations and networks.

I have studied several program documents, proposals and reports from networks seeking funds to train next generation academics over the last 15 years. These documents reveal that there are at least, 28 capacities / skills that scholars that comprise the next generation of academics are expected to acquire, practice, implement and perfect as they grow into their academic career.

These capabilities can be divided into four clusters, namely: (1) capabilities pertaining to advancing knowledge of the discipline, (2) those pertaining to advancing effective knowledge transfer and nurturing scholars, (3) capabilities on interfacing with policy and the public, and (4) those concerned with participation in institutional management.

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[4]http://www.aphrc.org

[5]http://www.ushepia.uct.ac.za

Advancing Knowledge of the Discipline

The first cluster comprises capabilities and skills that are related to the scholar's grasp and pursuit of the discipline.

- They have a deep understanding and a continually updated grasp of their central discipline
- They are engaged in research at the frontiers of the discipline where such research is of national and global importance
- They publish regularly in international peer reviewed journals and they use every available opportunity to engage with the national and international debates about the standards and quality of knowledge in their discipline and the direction of new frontiers
- They publish books with important analytical perspectives in the discipline
- They participate in institutional, national and international forums to advance the discipline and their expertise
- They are active members of relevant professional networks, societies and associations and regularly contribute to their activities, programs and projects
- They serve on editorial boards and review panels for various publications and journals in their discipline.

Promoting Effective Knowledge and Skills Transfer

The second cluster embraces the academic's capabilities in teaching and in nurturing a new generation of scholars in the discipline.

- They are effective teachers who assess their student's learning and also their own abilities to transfer knowledge and skills
- They participate in the training and supervision of emerging researchers and scholars
- They are constantly searching out and engaging with new mentors as they in turn, mentor emerging scholars, researchers and academics
- They are core organizers of a vibrant intellectual and scholarly community in their institution
- They are passionate about identifying, recruiting and surrounding themselves with undergraduates in order to interest them in the discipline
- They seek opportunities to improve their capacity to carry out valid and reliable assessment of their students' learning
- They collaborate with lower levels of the education system to ensure that these levels equip students adequately with the foundational knowledge required to pursue the relevant discipline at university and other tertiary level

Interfacing with the Public and Public Policy

The third cluster comprises capabilities and skills that are related to how the academic uses her discipline expertise and skills to interface and engage with the public and public policy.

- They are active members of NGOs that champion activism around social issues related to their discipline
- They have mutually beneficial links with community issues, institutions and organizations where they usually offer their expertise on a voluntary basis
- They are well connected to national, regional and international research and policy institutes and are often engaged as experts on the policy work
- They are engaged in popularizing information in their discipline and translate their complex disciplinary research findings into simple information for public consumption usually writing in popular magazines and newspapers
- They engage in public debates on issues and policy related to their expertise and will initiate and sustain contacts with policy makers so as to feed them with information relevant to policy making
- They analyze public domain quantitative information for purposes of returning their perspective to the public and using the results in research and teaching
- They engage as far as feasible with government social services relevant to their discipline

Participation in Institutional Management

The fourth cluster speaks to how the academic positions herself within the overall institutional framework so as to be an important participant in the institution's broader mission and aspirations.

- They are actively involved in the management of their units and in the various relevant aspects of the whole institution's management
- They mobilize resources from a wide range of internal and external sources for a variety of purposes
- They endeavor to learn to use new technologies and strategies in teaching, in research, in communication and in their overall work
- They have a healthy respect for the management and supervisory systems in the unit and in the institution but are also innovative and solution seeking critics
- They are active alumni and supporters of the alumni of their work institution
- They pursue inter departmental and inter institutional collaboration and partnerships
- They demonstrate their belief about the importance of all disciplines through their communication and actions when dealing with broader resource allocation issues.

Five observations emerge regarding acquisition of the capabilities and skills:

(1) Given the relatively low productivity in African academic institutions the possession, manifestation and use of these capabilities would appear to be relatively limited.
(2) In training effort is concentrated disproportionately on the first seven capabilities in the first cluster with only an eclectic smattering of skills from the other three clusters.

(3) In well-resourced academic institutions emerging scholars acquire these capabilities as a matter of course through the multiplicity of activities and experiences in highly supportive environments.

(4) In resource-starved academic institutions the development of most aspects of the clusters becomes stunted unless specific focus is directed towards their development through provision of special resources and programs.

(5) Because there are major disparities in the institutional cultures, ethos, attitudes and work ethics that come to predominate in resource starved environments the training of next generation scholars must purposefully equip the post graduate student, who is going to work in a resource-starved African academic institution, with the appreciation of the realities and challenges therein and what it will take for her to become a successful and productive first rate scholar, researcher and academic in that environment.

Before I attempt to answer that question, that I posed at the beginning let me consider briefly three components of the African academic institution's environment, namely: (1) Confusing fundamental purposes, (2) misapplication of expertise, and (3) erosion of self-reliance which I think are critical to figuring out how next generation academics can be nurtured to navigate them successfully.

Confusing and Conflicting Fundamental Purposes

Despite efforts to articulate missions and visions all geared towards producing centers of excellence in teaching, research and learning, the majority of African academic institutions continue to struggle with articulating clearly the fundamental purpose of their role. There is not a single and congruent frame of reference on which to base expectations, decisions and actions by all legitimate stakeholders.

Because there are many centers of competing interests in African academic institutions the foundation on which to build strategy, management, operational activities, and pretty well everything else that happens in an academic institution remains confusing and constantly amenable to power struggles and conflicting interpretation by and among a wide range of legitimate stakeholders**.**

If for example, you were to pose the following questions to different units in any public university in Uganda you would be quite bewildered by the vague and unsatisfactory answers that emerge:

- What obligations do public universities have and to who?
- What are the key priorities of public universities?
- Who are the owners of the public universities?
- Are the students customers or are they owners or both?
- Are academic staff merely employees or customers or are they sharing in ownership?
- What about the administrative staff? Are they owners or merely employees?
- Are the increasingly commercial provisions of the public universities a public service?
- Is academic staff with low salaries and long hours for independent research being exploited or not?

- Or since promotions arise from being independently published researchers, is academic staff well compensated in proportion to how much they actually work for the university?

Given such uncertainties and vagueness in answers to these and several other questions, two consequences emerge"

(1) It very difficult for the leadership to develop and achieve consistency in messages to staff regarding their retention within a public African academic institution.

(2) Without a fundamental purpose that transcends mere job performance, it is difficult for staff to align their efforts and expectations and motivation alongside such confusing and conflicting aims and principles.

What this means is that every next generation academic must define for her what will be the anchor of her retention in the service of a particular African academic institution. That is, the fundamental purpose of her role and the values, attitudes and dispositions on which she will base her expectations of herself, her decisions and actions as an academic in An African academic institution. If she believes that she has a fundamental purpose that set her apart as a next generation academic and which will drive her service in the institution, then there is a very high probability of her becoming retained.

If however, she expects the institution to define for her the fundamental purpose to drive her long term engagement with the institution, there is a very high probability of her becoming highly dissatisfied with the system and thereafter, working instead on ways to find 'greener pastures.'

Misapplication of Academic Expertise

The second component of the African academic institution's environment is the frequent tendency to misapply academic expertise. A business colleague once stated that academics in African institution are not as productive as they could be because of at least four factors:(a) They believe too much in the contribution of qualifications, experience, references and transcripts not realizing that when it comes to actual delivery, it is the set of values and attitudes that one holds that will determine productivity. (b) They are far too well educated in their specializations and usually too poorly informed about other fields of knowledge. They do not usually realize that often the solution to a problem holding back their own progress and that of their institution is to be found within an entirely different field other than their own specialization. (c) While those in the social sciences, especially psychology may be credited with developing important theoretical ideas and testing them out, it is rare to credit them with taking the steps to use their own findings in their interactions and work. (d) Many academics are in the business of managing their reputation instead of boosting their productivity, which would automatically boost their reputation.

These factors suggest that a great deal of effort needs to be devoted to securing better results in the ways that academics use and apply their expertise across different facets of their scholarly, personal and collective lives to be able to increase productivity.

Erosion of Self Reliance

The third component of the African academic institution's environment is the erosion of self-reliance. No doubt African academic institutions are greatly affected by the intense poverty that is widespread in their societies. Resources are scarce within a context of a dizzying maze of needs in large populations that are prone to violence, natural disasters and internal conflict. The situation is exacerbated by the reckless wastage and misuse of the available meager resources as well as the proliferation of poor investments complimented by various degrees of corruption among the ruling elite. The overall results of these factors pertinent to our discussion here are two:

- Academic institutions are a microcosm of the national ethos and it is hardly surprising that their ruling elite at various levels sometimes behave in a fashion similar to that of the political elite. For instance, the national malaise requiring almost everything should to be funded by donors has more or less been patented by academic institutions when it comes to research.
- Self reliance and motivation, volunteerism and positive adventurism, entrepreneurship and giving back to the community, self-sacrifice for the sake of innovation and that deeper sense of collective enterprise, striving and success have all been severely eroded. To paraphrase Sunny Bindra,[6]' observation about many African business and companies, African academic institutions are now full of the killers of innovation: the 'victims' (Can you believe what they want us to do now? I don't get paid enough for this); the 'non-believers' (Why should we work so hard on this? It will never go anywhere) and the 'we know it all' (You people obviously don't understand the situation we are in. We have heard all this before. It won't work).

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[6] Sunny Bindra: The enemies of innovation are usually found inside the company; 26 March 2012, http://www.suwords.com

Nurturing Next Generation Academics

Armed with the above three factors let me return to the questions about retention, namely: What is the model of a compass that would enable a 'next generation academic' to navigate what appears to be endemic stormy and rough seas of an African academic institution so as to become a highly successful and productive first rate scholar, researcher, teacher and academic?

Suggestions from Leaders of Academic Institutions

During a meeting held in Nairobi in November 2010 organized by the Carnegie Corporation, bringing together Vice Chancellors and top educators and trainers of post graduate students several speakers gave their opinions as to what they thought needed to be done in order to retain the next generation of academics. The following are some of the suggestions that were offered:

- In training the students, there should be focus on both the institution and the student through professionalizing the environment whereby students collaborate with other researchers and where they have an opportunity to teach in MA programs as they work on their doctorates. This provides an inbuilt mechanism of retention.
- Students on doctoral work should be encouraged to do joint research and publication as one way of promoting retention.
- African countries and governments will have to invest much more in higher education in order to build and retain the required capacities by financing reasonable budgets for research, travel to conferences and sabbaticals and for supporting the activities needed to build and sustain an ongoing vibrant intellectual community.
- The issue of retention of highly qualified academics needs to be recast at national and regional levels within the context of redefining ownership of higher education by society and thus being aware of the need to remunerate them appropriately in order for them to remain of service to society.
- The best option for retention of academics in the long term is one where universities in a country work gradually to achieve a differentiated system with different institutions playing different roles within an expanding system. Universities can advance their long-term interest by first addressing the needs of the other players in the education system, and in so doing demonstrate that it is of national interest for government to invest in research, teaching and postgraduate universities.

The first two suggestions refer to linking training with retention something that many programs are already trying to do using various strategies. The next two refer to governments and society paying appropriately highly qualified people – something we would all love to see happen in our lifetimes. The last suggestion alludes to a reduction in teaching workloads by increasing institutional differentiation, for example, creating teaching universities, research universities, and professional development universities. This is something that some universities are quietly chipping away at but it is an incredibly sensitive issue.

Taking a Different Approach

While I concur with all the above suggestions, my overall view is that addressing nurturing and retention under current circumstances should be a joint and coordinated effort between the student who will become a next generation scholar, the academic institution that trains her and the academic institution where she will work.

Nurturing scholars to become and remain next generation academics for retention in African academic institutions starts on the same day that a student is recruited in a post graduate training program and continues for many years. During that time those being nurtured gradually transform themselves into experts who in turn, begin to nurture a new crop of academics.

This is a fundamental point and it is the one that will demonstrate if there is a 'real distinction' between those who have been trained purposefully knowing that they are the next generation of academics and those who happened to have been trained and obtained postgraduate degrees and by more or less chance, found themselves in African universities as academics.

In addition to grounding the student in aspects of the 28 capabilities described earlier, I envisage a continuous 'program' of student self-education and training to help the student who is going to work in a resource-starved African academic institution to increasingly appreciate the realities and challenges therein and what it will take for her to succeed.

The program's components are referenced to five major stages of the student's future career progression, namely: (1) the recruitment stage, (2) the student or next generation academic under formal training; (3) the early career next generation academic; (4) the midcareer next generation academic; and (5) the senior or 'loftier' next generation academic.

(1) Recruiting for Next Generation Academic Programs

It is a fundamental characteristic of strong and successful organizations where the leadership has a clear goal of what they want their organization to be in future to pay serious attention to the mantra, "Select the right people".

For example, ALC's selection process for its fellowship is rigorous because it wants to select the right people. It is also noteworthy that universities supported by the Carnegie Corporation for the next generation academics programs have increasingly become conscious of the importance of selecting the right people. The essence of the recruitment process is its attention to the personality, attitudes, perceptions, interactive dynamics and the articulation of why the applicant wants to become a next generation academic.

At ALC for example, they want the applicant to explain how they intend to use the new knowledge and skills they will acquire from the program to bring about or promote the processes of positive change. This approach to recruiting should become standard instead of simply relying on the academic qualification to decide on who should be recruited.

Unfortunately, once the right person has been recruited as a postgraduate student, many programs move on with the course work or lab work or designing thesis without assisting the

recruit to make the important connection between the nature of her recruitment and what she will be doing throughout her career as a next generation academic. Many successful recruits come to think that the rigorous recruiting processes were simply for the purposes of selecting only those that the resource envelope could afford.

On the contrary, the successful recruit is there because of her potential and future promise. It is therefore, imperative that when the recruit becomes a student she gets an early opportunity to discuss in much more depth the whole idea of her being trained to be a next generation academic. I would argue that because the programs miss this early opportunity to give their version of what they believe a next generation academic should be doing while being trained and in the future, the majority of recruited fellows somewhat get stunted at 'studentship behavior' instead of beginning there and then to shape a new set of perspectives, behaviors, attitudes and expectations of themselves as innovators and drivers of actions that will assist in negotiating the rough seas of the African academic institution.

(2) The Student or Emerging Next Generation Academic

The task of the student who is aspiring to become a next generation academic has four overlapping strands:

The first is to build solid and deep knowledge and understanding in the discipline area, in research skills, and in the ropes of scholarly writing publishing.

The second strand is to build a solid and deep understanding of African academic institutional and cultural ethos and environments.

The third is to continuously develop a deeper sense of one's own self knowledge, dispositions, attitudes, preferences, moral strength and shortcomings, with the purpose of discovering and sharpening one's aptitudes, talents and propensities that resonate with one's future career trajectory.

The fourth strand is to conceptualize, develop and continuously revise and refine a set of personal road maps or plans on how the student, using the knowledge and skills she has gained while carrying out the first three strands and once her training program is completed, will convert and transform what she now sees as challenges into real opportunities to develop, craft and build a truly Africa driven vision of scholarship and service.

Let me elaborate each strand.

The Discipline Strand

Generally the first prong is as already and stated taken care in the formal course designed to develop the 28 capabilities mentioned earlier. I will not say any more about this prong since it is the concentration of most of the current good programs. However, more effort needs to go into equipping students with adequate experiences to support solid development of all the capacities and skills in all clusters.

Institutional Knowledge and Personal Mastery

In regard to the next two strands the ALC post graduate training program, like several other excellent university programs, especially in South Africa supported by Carnegie, is already ahead in assisting next generation academics to train themselves for the future through mentoring.

The ALC has one of the best mentoring efforts that I have come across in universities that are training next generation academics. Yet ALC recognizes that its current overall program does not go far enough into the issues that students need to be exposed to so that they can prepare themselves adequately to serve in African academic institutions.

To complement what ALC is already doing, I envisage, for example, a collective endeavor by teams of students, may be grouped along national or regional criteria where a program of activity would be designed and be implemented by the team in consultation with the teachers and mentors and important stakeholders along the three areas that make university environments tough places to work.

The goal is to ensure that by the end of all components of the student's program she is armed with adequate knowledge and viable strategies on how to make an acceptable entry into the university environment and culture, how to put down one's roots in this environment, how to function successfully and innovatively, how to grow, flourish and excel, and how to stay highly productive for the long haul.

The following are very initial thoughts about what elements might be in each of the last three prongs of the self-training program concerning the three factors that make for academic institutional environments a challenge to work in.

(a)   Tackling Confusing and Conflicting Fundamental Purposes

The student should study and learn about the confusing and conflicting fundamental purposes of the university where she was before joining the program, where she goes for internship and where she hopes to work. She should develop and reiterate a set of consistent messages on why she should serve at that particular university and unit and how her defined long-term service would help clarify and promote for herself a fundamental purpose of her service.

(b)   Addressing Misapplication of Academic Expertise

The student should explore in depth what master teachers, renowned philosophers, public orators, corporate and business gurus have written and said about productivity. She should select her own menu and teach and test herself and practice daily the attitudes and techniques of productivity that she thinks resonate with her personality and circumstances. She should continually assess her success with evidence-based measurements. She should read widely on leadership and management, excellent customer service, and brand loyalty, and continuously select and apply the results of her learning on productivity, leadership, management and organizational psychology to her interaction with others as she goes through the various components of the postgraduate course. She should also read widely on the concept of personal mastery, that is, the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening

one's personal vision, of focusing one's energies, of developing patience and of seeing reality objectively with as little self deception as possible.

(c)   Controlling Erosion of Self Reliance

The student should undertake a deep exploration of the manifestation and the presentation of the concept of 'African poverty' in international literature, in her country, in the various institutions that she interacts with and in her own and others' experiences in life. She should explore the presentation of: self as 'victim', non-believer' 'know-it-all' and 'dependent' as she goes through the overall postgraduate course.

She should assess the extent to which those attitudes may have held her or others back from higher levels of participation, productivity and success. She should develop a long term plan of how she is going to consistently eschew 'poverty', ensure self reliance, avoid dependence and exploitation of others, practice positive leadership and accountability behaviors and use innovation as a driver to demonstrate and perfect the 28 capabilities of a next generation academic.

In regard to the fourth strand of her self-education, as the student acquires this knowledge and evaluates her various attitudes and dispositions she should develop a road map that emphasizes three points, namely: (a) how she will consistently deliver on the messages of her fundamental purpose as she acquires and demonstrates the 28 capabilities of a next generation academic; (b) how she will consistently deliver high productivity as she acquires, practices, demonstrates and perfects the 28 capabilities of a next generation academic; and how she will serve as a self-reliant next generation academic.

In addition, as the student develops and refines the roadmap she would periodically share it with her colleagues and mentors and update it as she moves through the postgraduate program.

At the end of the overall training program she should write for publication (in whatever suitable format) a monograph describing both her journey through the self training and how that learning is likely to influence her career trajectory depending on the fundamental purposes that she has crafted for herself within the context of various experiments, strategies, attitudes and dispositions she has develop and consolidated along the way.

The Early Career Next Generation Academic

Let us assume that the ALC has graduated its Masters fellows who have gone through intensive course work, institutional visits and related activities, internship and mentoring throughout their 18 months program. In addition, the fellows have participated in and fulfilled the self-education program as outlined in (a) – (c) above. How does this fellow make an entry into an academic institution as a next generation academic?

It is the responsibility of both the training institution and the fellow to make the necessary preparations for a relatively smooth entry by doing the following: (a) If the fellow was not recruited from the university initially, then as part of herself education the fellow and the training institution ought to have been working hard to secure a position at the fellow's university of choice. This is not easy but it is not impossible.

The problem is that we all tend to leave the hard tasks for the last minute because we think we are too busy doing the important things to worry about the next step. One of the main reasons that the training institution and the fellow need to have a clear sense of where the fellow is going at the end of the course is because, stormy and rough institutional environments and cultures have to be prepared for well in advance of entry or re-entry of new graduates.

Imagine this scenario. In January 2009 a graduate had on her own initiative secured a position in a department of her choice as a 'research assistant' where she was assisting three senior academics with their research and where she had started the process of reading literature so as to begin to think about a masters' thesis proposal. The graduate comes across an ALC advert on the web offering an 18 months scholarship to Kings College London for a Masters degree in Peace and Security. One day in April 2010 the graduate informs the senior academics that sometime back she applied for a scholarship, which she has won and she will be leaving in two weeks to take up the scholarship. She requests the head of department to issue a letter of support from the university.

During the following two weeks she is rarely seen at the department, as she is busy making the necessary visa and travel arrangements. On the afternoon of her departure from the country she comes to the department in order to collect her paycheck and to bid farewell to those she meets in the corridors of the department and then takes off for Kings College London where she does her work for the next 18 months.

Nineteen months later she knocks on the door of the office of the head of department, enters the room to find a new face and states, "I am back. I have finished my degree. I want to rejoin the department. I have excelled in my studies. I want to see if I can start a new course on peace and security and I hope the department will support me to do so and also to search for research funds."

What is wrong with this picture? Are there aspects of it that make us feel uncomfortable? Do we feel that it presents a scenario that would promote a smooth re-entry into the university? What could the graduate have done better?

I am often told that graduates behave in these sorts of ways because they are protecting themselves against jealousy, envy and sabotage. While all these attitudes probably, I suspect that the more detrimental attitude is that of the graduate herself. Honest and timely communication is a strong weapon against vague threats to integrity and progress.

Here are six ideas that I believe will greatly help to build bridges between senior and junior scholars and make re-entry, nurturing and retention less of a challenge.

a) Making a smooth re-entry into the home university requires that the graduate prepares herself for such a possible re-entry right from the stage of applying for the fellowship by being candid about what she is doing and by communicating with her seniors at every step of the way until she leaves the department to take up her scholarship.

b) Once the student has understood what the total program is going to involve, for example, course work, institutional visits, mentoring, internship, research, submission of thesis, etc, she should write a précis of this program in form of a letter and send it to her former senior supervisors as well as to the head of department responsible for issuing the supporting letter. The idea is to let these senior people know that the graduate still considers herself an integral member of the department who regards the senior members as still her mentors and whose opinion she values and therefore, would like them to know what her work over the next 18 months is going to entail.

c) From then on wards the graduate should write to the same people at least twice a semester to update them on what she is doing. This is not a chat-chat note. It is a serious missive outlining what is happening, especially the knowledge and new skills emanating from the major components of the program, the progress the graduate is making, and the challenges being faced and tackled. These missives should also request for information about what is happening in the department back home, what activities the seniors have been involved in and in particular, the progress of the projects she was assisting with and any papers and other products emanating thereof.

d) The internet has made it extremely easy to transmit documents. Therefore, as the student accesses new literature she should constantly send some pieces back home to the seniors making it clear that she is sending some of the papers she has read and which have made an impression on her. The purpose here is to provide a sense to the seniors back home that the student is not writing just for the sake of writing but rather that there are important connections between what she is learning and the courses and research she left in the department. It is extremely important for the graduate to respond in a timely manner to all responses and requests just as it is important for her to keep on writing to the seniors even if they do not reply or do not reply on time or if they reply in only one-liners.

e) At the end of course work the student should be able to start broaching the idea of her desire to participate in either the teaching of a course on her specialty if the course already exists or in the design of a new course if it does not exist. This has to be approached with sensitivity since the student does not want to give the impression of being an expert but at the same time she wants to indicate that her new knowledge can make a useful contribution to the work in the department. This is also the time to

ensure where possible, that the student's research project resonates with some of the ideas in the department. The more the student is seen to solicit and use support and advice from the department the more likely she is to find colleagues rather adversaries when she returns.

f) Recall that the student will have been working with her ALC staff to concretize some information about what position she is likely to occupy when she goes back to the university. One of her most important missives to the department is to alert them of her pending arrival back home. She should secure definite appointments to meet the key people on return. These meetings should not be two minute 'head-ins". Rather this is the opportunity to talk about the position, the ideas about either a new course or an expanded course and more importantly to request for an opportunity to give a departmental seminar particularly on the research she did or she is doing, that which she wants to do and how best to work with colleagues in the department to implement her ideas on future research.

I need to emphasize that in graduate training programs such as those by ALC where the program has target universities the re-entry process will be much boosted if there is an effort and initiative by ALC to link the participating universities in some kind of loose network of mentors for the fellows. Similarly, ALC should ensure that key people in the relevant departments are provided with a variety of opportunities, for example through joint meetings and visits to ALC, to understand the overall purpose of the training course and to articulate their role as future mentors of the fellows once they have completed their studies.

I also need to underscore the following: if external training institutions are genuine in their quest to root and retain in resource starved academic institutions the scholars they have trained it is imperative that as they exert much effort to secure resources for training, they should exert equivalent amount of energy to involve the African academic institutions as full partners in the endeavor design re-entry programs.

Having achieved a reasonably smooth re-entry into the university, the early career next generation academic will be buffeted by the rough institutional environments and cultural storms discussed earlier and which will appear to have grown even rougher during her absence. A major solution is to begin to put in place the three plans or road maps on how to be successful in stormy seas that the student has put together, during the 18 months of self-training and education in her group.

Many graduating returnees inadvertently create animosity by going overboard in praising the quality of the environment, teachers and resources of the external academic institution where they have trained. They are also likely to criticize severely the shortcoming of the academic institution and staff where they have returned.

Unfortunately they are more likely to do all this when talking to postgraduate students and research assistants. Obviously, while lies are not acceptable, the returning scholar's main purpose is to build the confidence of others by being supportive. While the postgraduate students and research assistants may latch on to the returnee as a fresh ear to their many distresses, the next generation academic should figure out how to alleviate these emerging scholars' distress by enticing them to become part and parcel of her plans and roadmaps for a

collective future success.

In addition, the early career next generation academic needs to explore the whole university to ensure that she knows about all the research centers and institutes in the university. She should take time to visit each department in order to identify what research or community work that is relevant to her interests is going on there with the purpose of identifying niches where her own expertise might begin to be inserted.

If she is able to find one or two promising departments, or research centers and institutes then her interdepartmental collaboration efforts can be inaugurated. It is worth noting that if the returnee has a Masters degree these collaborations might be crucial to her future exploration on how to begin doctorate work. If the returnee already has a doctorate these collaborations might provide the impetus for solid post doctoral work.

The Mid-Career Next Generation Academic

The mid career next generation academic is envisaged to be a scholar who is implementing sufficiently the roadmaps and the plans of her self-education and training as well as one who is constantly engaged with various aspects of the 28 capabilities that make for a flourishing next generation academic. Recall that the mid career next generation academic will be advancing toward becoming an active researcher, an effective teacher, a scholar concerned with engaging with the public and policy institutions as well as with the administration of her unit and management broadly in the university.

Unfortunately most mid career academics do not appreciate the fact that the strength and luminosity of the rest of their career is likely to be consolidated during this stage. And of course, there are many challenges to this not least of which is family. Nevertheless, this is the most critical stage in retention precisely because of the fact that if the next generation academic has done an excellent job during the last two stages – as a student and as an early career academician – she is in a position where she is beginning to get noticed and her work is becoming appreciated both internally and externally.

Therefore, if she expresses an interest to move on to greener pastures there will be those who will be interested in taking her on the basis that she has already grasped and probably mastered the basic knowledge and skills in her discipline or field of study. Yet she has not yet ossified into 'a school of thought' and is therefore, still malleable, she can easily learn totally new frontiers of knowledge and even change her area of research.

In my view there are two main support systems that can stem the tide towards moving on to greener pastures among excellent mid career next generation academics, namely: increased exposure and joint productivity.

The mid career next generation academic needs as much exposure as possible to outside expertise and environments. This will help to elevate their conceptualization of their capacities and skills, their personal mastery, and their potential to reach higher levels of productivity and accomplishments.

If mid career next generation academics do not get this broader exposure, they become stunted intellectually because they can easily develop the idea that they have reached the water shade of their knowing, their ability to acquire new skills and their potential to innovate. In order to put their work and attitudes into perspective at this stage, the mid career next generation academic needs to take two more projects in self-education and training.

The first is a study of what has happened to African rising stars that left African academic institutions at either early or mid career stages to go and work elsewhere. The mid career next generation academic should do tracer studies of where African (national) rising academic stars, who became contributors to the brain drain and the Diaspora, is now in global productivity. Where are they? Who are they? What are their positions in these universities? What is the level of their productivity? Why is it at that level? What accounts for their success?

Are they satisfied with their careers? What are the drivers of their satisfaction? What challenges do they face?

The purpose of such a study is to learn from the Diaspora through building a comprehensive information base on people in the Diaspora who can become partners, mentors and networkers and role models and 'examples'. One concrete element that has come out of many studies of the intellectuals, scholars, researchers and academics in the Diaspora (as well as people in business and many other careers) is that they retain an empathetic attachment to the African continent in general and to their home countries and universities in particular. The task for the mid career next generation academic is to figure out how to build a mutually beneficial relationship between her, the Diaspora and the African institution so as to enhance collaboration in research, undertaking joint publication, crafting exchange programs, sharing literature and mentoring.

The second study is of research institutes especially in Africa where cohorts of alumni on next generation academics' programs may be in a position to collaborate or where other scholars may be interested in collaboration. It is imperative to have a systematic database of institutions whose websites the academic visits regularly to try to find and identify avenues for collaboration.

I took a casual look at the websites of seven universities that are represented within the cohorts and alumni of the ALC and I was pleasantly surprised to come across many research institutes and centers that are pursuing elements of research, policy, teaching and publication related to the broader interests of the ALC.

In summary I found 27 different thematic institutes and centers and 80 actual units in seven universities. The total in each university was 12, 14, 16, 14, 5, 11 and 8. While this large number of centers is to be applauded it speaks to the challenges of being able to raise adequate resources to support significant work in each of these centers. But that is a topic for another presentation!

Suffice it to emphasize here that reading about a research center on its website is one thing. Getting to understand reasonably well the center's work and the personnel that produce this work is quite another matter. The latter requires time and commitment on the part of the academic. However, one can imagine how much better informed an academic will be after reading the research work being produced and undertaken by ten or so such research centers. The table in Appendix A shows the centers I looked at.

My view is that if a mid career next generation academic was able to develop and sustain multiple collaborative relationships with three or four institutes of research at a time not only will her vision of what is possible be expanded but I feel that it would be mathematically impossible for this academic not to become an excellent researcher, an active publisher and an increasingly recognized expert in her field.

The second support system that a mid career next generation academic must cultivate and exploit to the maximum is what I call positive periodic overtures by the better resourced. Better resourced countries, development agencies, universities and a myriad networks of research institutes, centers and networks, and sometimes individuals offer opportunities for excellent African academics to either conduct research at home or to visit, study, research and work for short periods at external facilities and programs that have superb infrastructure and teams of

very active scholars, researchers and publishers. The mid career next generation academic should explore as many of these opportunities as possible.

Apart from opportunities either initiated by or addressed directly to universities and departments, there are increasingly opportunities to be searched for on the web. For example, Research Professional Africa is a database that provides funding information to both researchers and students. Institutions can subscribe to this resource. In one African academic institution, realizing that individual members of staff might find all manner of excuses not to access the database, a junior research assistant has been employed to compile from Research Professional Africa an on-line magazine that is circulated monthly to the university's community via email.

The online magazine appears to contain a wealth of information for different disciplines classified under three major categories of: Research Grants, Prizes and Scholarships, and Travel and Conference grants. I was informed that the effort has been rewarded by the emergence of an avid and voracious community of consumers given the usual complaints about the deleterious effects of the absence of information on funding opportunities.

The final point about the two support systems discussed here is that a genuine next generation academic would never see these opportunities as only a way for her to get ahead. Therefore, it is imperative that early on during the transition between early and mid career, the next generation academic should explore her own attitudes about the positive periodic overtures that she has experienced and received and how she converted their results from a personal to a community benefit. The mid career next generation academic should develop a plan of not only where she is going to search for positive periodic overtures but also how, when she receives such opportunities, she intends to convert the personal gains to community assets.

The mid career next generation academic has one more crucial task to perform. This task is for her to pull out of her archive the three plans or roadmaps that she developed and started implementing once she took up position at the end of her training program. She should do an objective evaluation of what has actually happened and the extent to which it tallies or differs from her original plans. She should explore what changes she has had to make in the plans and why and what the consequences have been. This analytic piece should be published with the aim of educating herself and key stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities of nurturing next generation academics.

Imagine how rich this presentation would have been if each one of the 300 or so scholars who have benefitted from various training programs as next generation academics over the last 15 years, had written and published such an evaluation and put it in the public domain!

The 'Loftier' Next Generation Academic

The loftier next generation academic is not necessarily a senior in years. Loftier in this case refers to behavior and attitude. The loftier, grander, higher and greater next generation academic is obviously near the top of the ladder of the 28 capabilities of next generation academics. She has struggled and persevered through the rough and stormy seas of her institutions' culture and environment, which hopefully is beginning to change for the better thanks to her efforts. The loftier next generation academic must have been very successful in implementing her roadmaps to success which she started while she was a student. She is very well published, a very effective teacher and is highly regarded in her field.

However, what really marks her out as a 'loftier' next generation academic is her disproportionate attention to training, mentoring and supporting the next generation of academics. She is a leader in the sense of organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal. She is also an expert at mobilizing what is referred to as 'discretionary energy' both for herself and among her co-workers.

Susan M. Heathfield[7] has defined employee discretionary energy as the energy that an employee chooses to exert in service to coworkers or customers at work or not. Discretionary energy is the get-up-and-go that the employee is willing to contribute beyond the basic requirements of the job. Employee discretionary energy is the oil that keeps the motor of a successful organization running, a powerful performance enhancer.

It is often said that even the most supportive workplace provides daily challenges and often appear to operate at cross-purposes with goals and efforts to encourage employee motivation. The 'loftier' next generation academic is the ultimate motivator and sounding board for people at all levels of academia and administration who are looking for fresh ideas and innovative ways of pursuing excellence.

I would summarize the most outstanding qualities of the 'loftier' as follows:

- They participate fully in the training and supervision of emerging researchers and scholars. They surround themselves with young students, not only from their own discipline but also from several other disciplines since they have a broader perspective of human capacity needs in higher education as whole

- They insist on joint publications with their students and junior colleagues and are comfortable with being junior co-authors when their juniors have done the major work

- They will insist on teaching at undergraduate level as well because they regard this as an opportunity to identify future post graduate students and thus want to equip undergraduates with the proper fundamentals in that discipline

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[7] http://humanresources.about.com/od/glossary

- They mobilize resources ably from a wide range of internal and external sources for the unit and the institution and the largest proportion of these resources goes towards providing training opportunities for next generation academics

- They have a regional and continent wide perspective to capacity building rather than a narrow institutional or national outlook

- They are prominent proponents of the value of entrenching effective teaching practices among researchers and scholars

- They are key supporters of and designers of programs and strategies for retaining next generation academics on the African continent

Custodians of Authentic Knowledge Systems

Let me come to the last part of this presentation where I want to briefly address the issue of custodians of authentic knowledge systems, which this conference is considering.

First of all the phrase knowledge systems has many different meanings. I have however, assumed that the intention here is to explore how to arrive at an acceptable organization of genuine information and data derived from the study of interpersonal and social interactions.

Fortunately for us there is really no need for us to reinvent the wheel. I would highly recommend that all of us should read rather carefully a relatively old book published by the McGraw-Hill Book Company in 1964 and written before the majority of you were born by Philip Phenix [8] with the title: Realms of Meaning: A Philosophy of the Curriculum for General Education.

In this seminal work, Phenix's central thesis is that knowledge in the disciplines has patterns or structures and the various patterns of knowledge are varieties of meaning with basic methods and representative ideas. This means that in order for information or data to become part of a particular discipline it must be conceptualized, collected, assembled, analyzed and reported using the specific methods within that discipline and the resultant knowledge must have meaning that resonates with the representative ideas in that particular discipline.

Clearly then the issue of authenticity of knowledge is not one that an individual can at this stage in development claim to define alone. Knowledge will be deemed to be authentic in a particular discipline if those who construct such knowledge use methods and conceptual frameworks that are recognized by the experts in that particular discipline.

Phenix identifies six different realms of meanings and says that each realm and its constituent sub-realms may be described by reference to its typical methods, leading ideas and characteristic structures. Time does not allow me to describe all six realms. However, let me

briefly describe three – Symbolics, Empirics and Synoptics which I feel are integral to the work of the ALC.

The Symbolics (ordinary language, mathematics and non-discursive symbolic forms such as gestures) have meaning that is contained in arbitrary symbolic structures, with socially accepted rules of formation and transformation, created as instruments for the expression and communication of any other meaning whatsoever.

The Empirics (the sciences of the physical world, of living things, and of man), which provide factual descriptions, generalizations and theoretical formulations and explanations, which are

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[8] Philip H. Phenix, *Realms of Meaning: a philosophy of the curriculum for general education*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York 1964.

based upon observations and experimentation in the world of matter, life, mind and society. They express meaning as probable empirical truths framed in accordance with certain rules of evidence and verification and making use of specified systems of analytical abstraction.

The Synoptics (history, religion, philosophy) combine empirical, esthetic and personal knowledge meanings into coherent wholes. For example, historical interpretation comprises an artful re-creation of the past, in obedience to factual evidence, for the purpose of revealing what people by their deliberate choices have made of themselves within the context of their given circumstances.

The authenticity of knowledge arises out of authentic (trustworthy, genuine, undisputed credible, legitimate) methods of producing such knowledge and not from personal whims and preferences.

Consequently, next generation academics as custodians of authentic knowledge systems have at least three major roles.

First, they must ensure that the knowledge they produce through research adheres to the strict boundaries and rules prescribed by the realm and sub-realm of meaning in which their work is embedded.

Second, two of the key aims of teaching disciplines at undergraduate levels are:

a) To ensure that the undergraduate student develops the capacity to think effectively and critically through being exposed to a variety of different disciplines; and

b) To ensure that the undergraduate achieves some depth in a field of knowledge and gets a critical appreciation of the ways of gaining knowledge and understanding in that discipline. This has two implications for the next generation academic: (a) For undergraduate teaching to be really effective, examples must be derived from authentic local knowledge derived from rigorous research and disciplined inquiry and analysis; (b) The sub-realms of meaning comprising knowledge relevant to peace, conflict and security in Africa such as the social sciences, history and humanities require a great depth of knowledge which can only be gained through wide reading, research and analysis. Low productivity of authentic knowledge stunts effective teaching, learning and research at all levels of the education system in these areas of critical importance to Africa's future.

Third, the next generation academic must remember as Calhoun has pointed out that the ecology in which field building occurs comprises not only particular ways of knowledge production but also intellectual conversations and collaborations to advance the field. This is why it is important for next generation academics to belong to different but sometimes overlapping networks. Calhoun notes that: 'Every discipline or field of study is a cluster of arguments, a cluster of debates and a cluster of fights among those who feel that they know the standards of operation within a given field.'

The critical issue is for next generation African academics is to be able to get in the conversation and influence the direction that the issues and debates take and not to simply conform to these debates.

Next generation African academics should be able to join the conversation and debates by bringing authentic knowledge into the international debate on one side or another of various questions in such a way that engages and potentially transforms the global debate. That is what true custodianship of knowledge systems is all about.

Appendix A
Research Institutes and Centers in Selected ALC Collaborating Universities

Name of Centre		Universities*							Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1	Centre for HIV Prevention and Research	X		X	X		X		4
2	Institute for Development Studies	X	X			X	X	X	5
3	Institute for Anthropology, Gender and African Studies	X	X	X	X		X	X	6
4	Institute for Tropical and Infectious Diseases	X					X		2
5	Institute for Nuclear Science and Technology	X							1
6	Population Studies and Research Institute	X	X	X			X	X	5
7	Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies	X	X	X X		X			5
8	African Languages Research Institute	X	X	X		X		X	5
9	Institute for the Study of Religions		X						1
10	Centre for Defense Studies		X		X				2
11	Human Resources Research Centre		X						1
12	Law Institute	X	X	X	X	X	X		6
13	Women's Law Institute		X						1
14	Institute for Mining Research		X		X			X	3
15	Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research		X	X	X	X	X	X	6
16	Institute for Adult Education	X	X	X	X		X		5
17	Institute for the Study of Music, Theatre and Drama			X X					2
18	Centre for Social Policy Analysis		X	X	X		X		4
19	Centre for Political, International Affairs and Diplomacy	X		X	X				3
20	Centre for Migration			X				X	2
21	Centre for African Wetlands			X					1
22	Centre for African Foods			X			X		2
23	African Tax Institute				X				1
24	Centre for Inclusive Banking in Africa				X				1
25	Centre for Communication and Reputation Management				X				1
26	Centre for Leadership	X			X				2
27	Centre for Human Rights				X		X	X	3
TOTALS		12	14	16	14	5	11	8	80

* University of Nairobi, University of Zimbabwe, University of Ghana Legon, University of Pretoria, University of Fort Hare, Makerere University and University of Dar es Salaam.