Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education

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This volume brings together excellent scholarship and innovative policy discussion to demonstrate the essential role of higher education in the development of Africa and of the world at large. Based on deep knowledge of the university system in several African countries, this book will reshape the debate on development in the global information economy for years to come. It should be mandatory reading for academics, policy-makers and concerned citizens, in Africa and elsewhere.

– Manuel Castells, Professor Emeritus, University of California at Berkeley, Laureate of the Holberg Prize 2012 and of the Bauman Prize 2013

The dominant global discourse in higher education now focuses on ‘world-class’ universities – inevitably located predominantly in North America, Europe and, increasingly, East Asia. The rest of the world, including Africa, is left to play catch-up. But that discourse should focus rather on the tensions, even contradictions, between ‘excellence’ and ‘engagement’ with which all universities must grapple. Here the African experience has much to offer the high-participation and generously resourced systems of the so-called developed world. This book offers a critical review of that experience, and so makes a major contribution to our understanding of higher education.

– Sir Peter Scott, former editor of Times Higher Education and Professor of Higher Education Studies, University College London, Institute of Education

This book addresses an important topic, presents an interesting approach and an in-depth analysis leading to concrete recommendations. It offers a critical overview of eight national flagship universities in Africa, and proposes key strategic goals that allow university leadership and government agencies to measure progress and to identify key areas for further investment and transformation. This book is timely when Africa is rethinking higher education, and it must read for all African higher education leaders and government agencies on the continent.

– Lidia Brito, UNESCO Regional Director for Science in Latin America and the Caribbean and Former Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Mozambique

The chapters in this book together speak clearly to several fundamentals of knowledge and its production: its meaning, its context, its relevance; its identity, its use and its historical, geographical and culture-relatedness. More critically, knowledge has identity, contradictory function and a signature; it belongs somewhere or to someone and serves some purpose. African universities have been the seekers and custodians of this identity, contradictions and signature.

– Malegapuru Makgoba, Vice-chancellor, University of KwaZulu-Natal and former Vice-president for Planning and Review, International Council for Science (Paris)