

**AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES AND THE CHALLENGES
OF A FRAGMENTED LINGUISTIC EXPERIENCE:
Decontaminating the Zimbabwean Colonial Past**

by

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Introduction

This paper is a follow-up to the Accra Workshop of 1972, whose participants were mainly concerned with producing a university model, uniquely African, as opposed to the western prototype (Ngar 1995: xiii). It investigates whether there is a response from African institutions, especially from universities, to this crisis. It further stresses the importance of local languages as tools for communication, socio-economic and cultural progress. The paper goes on to assess their fundamental relevance to the learning processes for promoting nation-building. African university education is now considered a stepping stone to a successful life which is a contributory factor to an increasingly high demand for university education. In spite of the value of university education, African governments' laxity in paying full attention to higher education is most likely due to the fact that there are more burning issues such as the HIV and AIDS pandemic and increasing poverty levels. The paper urges African universities to work towards developing *lingua francas* adapted to the continent's developmental issues. In one of his papers, Bamgbose (1992: 18) clearly states:

Language is without doubt the most important factor in the learning process for the transfer of knowledge or skills... is mediated through the spoken or written word. The paradox is that educational plans and programs are often designed to pay more attention to the structure of the educational systems and curricula than to language policy.