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Legacy of apartheid prevails in research sector

pendant Africa was a standing army with Western weapons. One of the few African countries to consider whether to do without a standing army was Tanzania. In 1964 Nyerere even had the opportunity to disband his entire army and not build an alternative one.

He did disband the old one, but he did not follow Costa Rica's example and do without. History of the nation-state in Europe reveals a persistent tendency of the European state to externalise conflict to promote greater unity at home. A sense of nationhood within each European country was partly fostered by a sense of rivalry and occasional conflict with its neighbours.

And the consolidation of the European state as a sovereign state was also partly forged in the fire of inter-European conflicts. But war has become too dangerous to be a reliable instrument of nation-building and state formation.

If pluralism is to be diverted

wards more creative formations, certain positive values would need to be more clearly identified, cultivated and institutionally consolidated.

WHEREAS there appears to be progress in breaking the racial divide in the labour market, the legacy of apartheid prevails in other areas. These include, among others, the area of knowledge production and research. It is an area that is still dominated by whites while Africans hover on the periphery. This poses a serious challenge for institutions of higher learning, research organisations and science councils to deal with this imbalance. The government, private sector and research institutions have programmes to assist the previously disadvantaged.

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siderations hinges on proper planning, how well organised they are, commitment on the part of the mentor and the relationship between the mentor and protégé. The absence of these considerations results in the intern becoming the senior employee's lackey which makes it virtually impossible for the protégé to develop intellectually and to participate actively.

It is worrying that the rate of "intellectual output" from Africans in institutions of higher learning and science is slow, whereas it continues to grow rapidly among whites.

Is the apparent lack of black contributions in research a result of an unlevel playing field or a question of there not being enough programmes in place to help develop and support black researchers, asks BRUTUS MALADA

The internships should not be conceived in isolation from the politics of social exclusion and inequality that exist, otherwise they will perpetuate rather than eliminate racial division.

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Unfortunately, these cannot achieve miracles without the commitment of institutions in the knowledge industry. Institutions of higher learning, and in particular research institutions, must develop active mentoring programmes as part of developing skills in the knowledge industry.

By "intellectual output" I refer to journal articles, including peer-reviewed articles, books, etc.

Is it an issue of the playing field not being level or is it because there aren't enough supportive programmes in place to harness black contributions?

In terms of the latter, it is worth noting that there are initiatives from both the government and research institutes to deal with these challenges.

The National Research Foundation, for instance, supports and helps to fund black and, in particular, female researchers.

We must all "invest in people" if we are to bridge the racial divide in the knowledge industry.

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