THE REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICAN ANGLOPHONE COUNTRIES

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Abstract
        The paper presented is based on a comprehensive research approach to help enhancing reform and development systems of Higher Education in African countries. And this involved undertaking a desktop review to determine the current trends and initiatives internationally and in Africa. In addition, a limited number of interviews have been held with individuals to provide further input. Finally, the entire strategy was discussed at an Experts' meeting held in Zhejiang Normal University (China) in August, 2012. And the descriptive analytical and experimental methods are used in this research.

The results of the study are expected to be beneficial for the reform development systems of higher education programs in the African countries.

The study sample consists of (30) participants coming from the African Anglophone countries.

There are topics of the reform and development systems of Higher Education in African countries were prepared depending to highlights on current status of higher education and, higher education environment and higher education challenges and considers some of the key challenges and opportunities that may need to be considered in developing a framework for harmonization of higher education programs across Africa.

The Conclusion showed there are African countries must urgently reform and develop systems and implement higher education policies aimed at expanding student enrolments, strengthening quality and the qualifications of academics, at least doubling the production of postgraduates, developing research capability and changing how universities work including improving governance and planning.

The researchers recommend the scale up and modernize the higher education systems through ICT infrastructure.

Keywords: Reform, development systems, higher education

Introduction

The African Anglophone countries, which has a vision of integration, peace, prosperity and peerage in the global community, regards education as a key instrument in achieving its vision of developing quality human resources and contributing towards increased mobility of Africans around the continent. However, within Africa, there are many different systems of education which are based on different national or colonial and other legacies across Africa. One of the results of this is the lack of mutual recognition of different forms of certification, and this limits African integration and the mobility of students across Africa.

In the framework of cooperation between China and Africa, the ministry of higher education in china has embarked to hold seminar on Higher Education Administration for African countries. This seminar was held from 27/7/2012 to 16th August 2012. The seminar lasted for 21 days. The workshop was about the management of higher education institutions and educational reforms in China, it was hosted by the Zhejiang Normal University. The rationale for this is based on the belief that such an initiative will help to foster cooperation in information exchange, harmonization of procedures and policies, attainment of comparability among qualifications, and possibly the standardization of curricula, so as to facilitate professional mobility for both employment and further study.

There is increasing realization globally of the importance of close cooperation between countries through sharing of resources and technologies, addressing common problems, and facilitating the free movement of people. Increased cooperation through trade and services has resulted in a corresponding need for education systems to be adapted to respond to the demands for trained people with recognized qualifications who are able and ready to move and serve in any part of the world.

Objectives of the study

A comprehensive research on harmonization in higher education in Africa prepared, and provides the context for this paper. That research focuses on current trends and initiatives around harmonization of higher education programs (internationally, continentally, and nationally). And this research highlights on current status of higher education and higher education system and, higher education environment and higher education challenges and considers some of the key challenges and opportunities that may need to be considered in developing a framework for harmonization of higher education programs across Africa

Methodology of the Study

The descriptive analytical and experimental methods were used in this research.

Methods of the Study

The paper presented is based on a comprehensive research approach to help enhancing reform and development systems of Higher Education in African countries. And this involved undertaking a desktop review to determine the current trends and initiatives internationally and in Africa. In addition, a limited number of interviews have been held with individuals to provide further input. Finally, the entire strategy was discussed at an Experts' meeting held in Zhejiang Normal University (China) in August, 2012.

Sample of the Study

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Defining of Higher Education

The definition of higher education differs according to the context in which it is used. (see for example Birstwistle, 2003; Brooks, 2005).There is no overall consensus on the exact objectives of higher education, although some objectives (for example, production of a qualified workforce, training people for careers in research, and enhancing life prospects) are more commonly cited (Martin & Stella, 2007) Almost all definitions agree that higher education refers to post-secondary education (or study beyond the level of post-secondary education), where a degree, diploma, or certificate is awarded at the end of study.

Higher education builds on the level of competence, knowledge, and skills normally acquired in secondary education. The exact definition of this level, and consequently of higher education and of a higher education institution or programme, varies from one country to another. Consequently, the concept of 'higher education institution' may also vary. For example, in some countries, teaching is considered to be a field of higher education, while, in others, teaching is considered to be part of post-secondary education without falling into higher education. Thus, a programme or course of study falling within the definition of higher education in one country does not necessarily fall within the definition of higher education in other countries (UNESCO, 1997).

The AAU's Working Group on Higher Education recommends that its definition of higher education should include tertiary education institutions other than universities (Association of African Universities, no

date). In addition, at the second African Union Meetings of Experts, higher education was described as including all post-secondary education, including universities, polytechnics and technical colleges, teacher training institutions, institutes for medical training and agriculture (and other fields), distance education centres, and research centres and institutes, with the possibility of expanding to include other forms of post-secondary education (Association of African Universities, 2006).

Need to consider the African context
Overall, there was a positive response from people surveyed to the use of some form of quality systems in enhancing quality in Africa. Respondents indicated that such a mechanism could provide an opportunity for institutions to strive towards and invest more in quality and to assess their own capacity and quality (Afeti, 2007; Nyaigotti-Chacha, 2007), as this would promote the 'emergence of an institutional culture of accountability of the system to learners and society in general in terms of what one can expect of a "good" university' (Boukary, 2007). It would also 'draw attention to areas of weakness in the system and [would] help institutions in Africa to strive for excellence' (Oyewole, 2007) and 'promote public confidence that the quality of teaching and research is being safeguarded and enhanced' (Kaaouchi, 2007). It is regarded as also having a potential impact on governments in that they 'will be more sympathetic to institutional requests for quality improvement funding' (Afeti, 2007) and can assist in identifying and developing centres of excellence (Nyaigotti-Chacha, 2007).

Examples of National Ranking Systems
Most countries with large higher education systems have ranking systems. National rankings are usually undertaken by newspapers and magazines in order to assist students in selecting a university within a country. They generally use a range of measures. Research performance of academic staff is typically given a low weight. In contrast, studies used to allocate funds or to evaluate overall standing of an institution typically assign heavy weight to research (Williams & van Dyk, 2005).

The Shanghai Jiao Tong University Global Ranking (SJTU)
The first worldwide ranking by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University's (SJTU) Institute of Higher Education was in 2003. The purpose of developing the ARWU was to create and foster the development of World Class Universities (WCU) in China. These rankings are issued annually and the sole focus is research. The latest edition was compiled in August, 2006. The Jiao Tong group argues that the only data sufficiently reliable for ranking purposes are broadly available and internationally comparable data

of measurable research performance. They consider it impossible to compare teaching and learning due to the large differences between universities and the great variety of countries, and because of the technical difficulties involved in obtaining internationally comparable data. Further, the Jiao Tong group states that it does not want to use subjective measures of opinion or data sourced from universities themselves. Only non-subjective indicators and internationally comparable data that everyone can verify in some way are used. The rankings are reportedly done for pure academic interests, without external support (Liu, 2006; Marginson, 2007).

Table 1 Shanghai Jiao Tong university rankings: weightings (Liu, 2006).

Criteria	Indicator	Code	Weight
Quality of Education	Alumni of institution winning Nobel Prize and Fields medals	Alumni	10%
Quality of Faculty	Staff of an institution winning Nobel Prize and Fields medals	Award	20%
	Highly Cited researchers in 21 broad subject categories	HiCi	20%
Research Output	Articles published in nature and science	N&S	20%
	Articles in SCIE, SSCI, and AHCI (Arts and Humanities Citation Index)	SCI	20%
Size of Institution	Academic Performance with respect to the size of an institution	Size	10%
Total			100%

For institutions specialized in humanities and social sciences such as the London School of Economics, Nature and Science is not considered and its weight is relocated to other indicators (Liu, 2006).

Table 2 Results of ARWU - Top 500 Universities by Region(Liu, 2006)

Region	Top 20	Top 100	Top 200	Top 300	Top 400	Top 500
Americas	17	57	100	140	165	198
Europe	2	35	79	123	168	205
Asia-Pacific	1	8	23	36	65	93
Africa				1	2	4
Total	20	100	202	300	400	500

Liu and Cheng (2005) note that most of the top institutions are in developed countries, indicating the importance of economic power in building world-class universities. Merisotisand Sadlak (2005). Note that the regional breakdown of institutions in the top ranks follows a 'predictable geopolitical pecking order'. With regard to the distribution of scores, 17 of the top 20 institutions are American (Merisotis & Sadlak, 2005). The Jiao Tong group acknowledge that there are some methodological and technical problems with ARWU. The SJTU ranking has been criticized for having a

bias towards sciences as many well-known institutions specialized in humanities and social sciences are ranked relatively low. Since 2004, therefore the indicator of Nature and Science has not been considered for institutions specialized in humanities and social sciences, and its weight is relocated to other indicators. The group also point out that, if a university specialized in social sciences and humanities had Nobel Laureates in economics and Highly Cited Researchers in social sciences, it should have good standing. Since 2005, a weight of two for articles indexed by SSCI and AHCI was considered (Liu, 2006).

Approach to Development
The importance of being explicit about how one understands quality when developing any quality assessment or rating approach was highlighted in the literature. For this reason, it is important to briefly describe the approach underpinning the proposed developing mechanism.
Given the widely diverse African context (regional, national, and more specifically higher education contexts) with institutions having varying missions, student target groups, modes of delivery, national support and so on, a 'fitness for purpose' approach to quality is likely to be most appropriate. For example.
The advantage and significance of the fitness for purpose concept of quality is that is takes account of:
•   The diversity of higher education missions and provision; and
•   The importance of the educational process (Ekong, 2003, p.5)
However, Martin and Stella (2007) also emphasize that some balance between fitness for purpose and an excellence or 'golden standard' approach needs to be found to ensure at least minimum standards are met. The developing mechanism proposed here attempts to do just this. A series of quality criteria are proposed and assessed within the context of specific institutional missions. This takes account, as far as possible, of the diverse contexts in question, but still defines a set of quality criteria that are believed, based on the research reviewed and expert inputs, to be indicators of development in higher education.

Current Status of Higher Education
Higher Education (HE) covers the post-secondary segment of the national education system which is often given in Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Related Institutions.
Although few in number, most of the HEs in Africa were started by colonial masters and missionary bodies as a tool to help develop the human resources of the countries concerned. The few established HEs were serving

various countries in particular sub-regions. For example, Makerere University in Uganda served the East African countries.

The various laws which establish higher HEs provide for a governing council of sponsors, faculty, students and civil society vested with all authority appointments, curriculum development, examining, certification and all.   Other distinguishing features of HEs include participatory self-governance confirmed by provision in the law for an academic board and other statutory policies. There is presumption of a forum of equals when statutory committees meet which confirms collegiality as another distinguishing feature for HEs. Due to the liberalisation of the education sector there has been an increase in the level of private sector participation.

Funding of HEs in Africa is mainly through government subvention and Internally Generated Funds (IGF) which is increasingly becoming significant. In addition, other non-governmental organizations also contribute to the funding of HEs.

Emerging Lessons for African countries

Whilst there has been increasing amount of work done on an international level in this field, it appears to be a relatively new phenomenon in Africa, aside from Nigeria's efforts. To date, indicating a need to consider specifically what quality means in the context of African higher education, and how quality might be measured or assessed.

Any approach to improving quality needs to acknowledge and grapple with issues relating to the diversity that exists between HEIs and therefore needs to specifically consider the African context. There is a need to consider local contexts, and the mission and goals of each institution. It has also been argued that rankings could have a negative impact and given the large number of institutions in Africa, and their diverse histories, some universities may be unfairly advantaged over others. Also, Africa needs to be responsive to the fact that universities drive economic growth, and that there is a need to focus on developing quality assurance at a national level. Another factor to consider is that rankings usually encourage the flow of students to top universities usually located in US and UK, and in Africa it is possible that this would contribute to the problem of brain drain. The diversity of education systems and lack of development mechanisms in many African countries provides a unique opportunity to engage with and create a mechanism of quality rating that focuses on developing and improving education in African higher education institutions rather than simply comparing institutions.

Opportunities

The higher education environment presents the following opportunities:

- Increased demand for HE.
- Renewed government commitment to HE.
- Availability of policy framework.
- Economic stability within individual governments.
- Standardization of output.
- Free flow of information due to globalization and easy access to new technology.
- Development of collaborative partnerships.

Challenges

Although the environment presents the above opportunities the following are the key challenges:

- Inadequate and dwindling funding.
- Inadequate academic staffing.
- Inadequate infrastructure and technical equipment.
- Deteriorating quality of education and quality assurance issues.
- Limited access to HEs.
- High cost of education.
- Mismatch between the demand and supply of higher education outputs.

Imperatives for change

Four imperatives emerge for achieving a step-change in higher education development in African countries:

- Adopt a strategic, targeted and differentiated approach to the expansion of higher education enrolments at all levels of the higher education pipeline – undergraduate as well as postgraduate study.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in higher education institutions by increasing the qualifications of faculty, producing at least double the number of master's and doctoral graduates, and retaining these skills within the universities.
- Change how universities work in two respects: the first is to strengthen governance, leadership and management, and introduce management information systems to improve the effectiveness of higher education planning and expenditure; the second is to strengthen scholarship through interdisciplinary practice and collaboration for innovation.
- Plan how universities develop their research capability. Will they develop research activities in order to achieve a good mix of applied

research, a focus on direct technology transfer as well as basic research with long-term potential for innovation? Will they explicitly link postgraduate and doctoral education to research?

Conclusion

African countries must urgently develop and implement higher education policies aimed at expanding student enrolments, strengthening quality and the qualifications of academics, at least doubling the production of postgraduates, developing research capability and changing how universities work including improving governance and planning.

If African countries continue along their current higher education trajectory without making significant changes, the region is projected to achieve a 16.3% higher education enrolment rate by 2050.

This progress is insufficient when compared to the current global gross tertiary enrolment ratio of 30%, and will erode the future of higher education institutions in the region.

As a result, higher education enrolment outcomes reflect poorly on the education investment made. Because increased demand for higher education has not been matched by increased levels of funding, the quality of higher education in the African region has deteriorated and the number of academic staff has declined.

Unless the African countries changes its higher education strategy, by 2050 African countries will fall even further behind other regions in Africa and the world in respect of tertiary enrolment rates.

Recommendations

Based on the challenges enumerated above, the following are the key recommendations:

1. Finding innovative ways of funding higher education
2. Increasing capacity building for staff
3. Seeking ways of improving employee conditions of service
4. Strengthening industry- University linkages and engagement as well as private public partnership.
5. Developing a synergy between curriculum and national development priorities.
6. Emphasising the implementation of educational plans.

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