

African Universities as Development Agents

– The Role of Regional Cooperation" .

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Historical Evolution of Universities in Africa



Before the advent of modern universities

- Africa has an indigenous African educational system.
- The Egyptians are credited with writing in 3200 BCE, and the ancient University of Timbuktu was founded in 1110 CE.
- None of these schools offered university-level education



Modern university education

- ❑ The earliest universities in Africa include
- ❑ Al Quaraouiyine University in Morocco, established in 859 AD,
- ❑ Al-Azhar University in Egypt, founded in 970 AD.
- ❑ In East Africa, Makerere University in Uganda, established in 1922, is recognized as the oldest higher learning institution in that region.



State of Universities in Africa

- **Massification - Expansion and Access to Higher Education**
- **Funding**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Research Output**
- **Curriculum and Graduate Employability**
- **Global Rankings and Reputation**
- **Quality Assurance and Governance**
- **University Autonomy**
- **Technological Integration and Digital Transformation**

Challenges Facing African Universities

1. Irrelevant Curricula

- Curricula are often a mixture of colonial models and nationalist input that may have made sense 30 or more years ago
- are intellectually outdated and professionally irrelevant today.

2. Resources Inadequacy and Deficiency

- insufficient resources to meet the rising demand.
- The quality of education often suffers as a result, with insufficient faculty-to-student ratios and overburdened facilities

Challenges Facing African Universities

3. Limited Funding for Research

- Most of the research funding in African universities comes from international sources.
- Domestic research budgets are minimal, and
- As a result, African universities contribute less to global scientific research compared to universities in other regions.

4. Massification:

- The number of students has overwhelmed the available infrastructures in many universities. The quality of education often suffers as a result, with insufficient faculty-to-student ratios and overburdened facilities.

Challenges Facing African Universities

5. Access Disparities

- Despite increased access, significant regional, gender, and socioeconomic disparities exist.
- Many students from rural areas or marginalized communities face challenges in gaining admission or affording university education.
- Few opportunities exist to cater for the physically impaired, including the deaf, and blind learners.

6. Staffing Challenges

- ❑ Faculty shortages and poor salaries for faculty have resulted in rapidly deteriorating quality.
- ❑ There is also the challenge of flight of qualified manpower and obstacles to the professional development of faculty.
- ❑ There is also lack of incentives for high academic and research performance. African universities suffer from brain drain, with many of their top academics and researchers moving abroad for better opportunities.
- ❑ This diminishes the local knowledge base and affects the quality of education and research.

Challenges Facing African Universities

7. Digital divide:

- ❑ Many universities in less affluent regions still lack adequate internet connectivity,
- ❑ challenges accessing e-learning resources due to high data costs and lack of devices.

8. Security, Political Instability and Political interference

- Political instability
- War
- Professors have been forced into exile.
- intellectual resources have been destroyed.

9. Regional Disintegration and Poor Collaboration

- Collaboration and partnership are weak
- quite easy for some of them to partner with the North.



Roles and Relevance of African Universities

Important Questions

What role are African universities playing in a continent marked by poverty, marginalization, and underdevelopment?

What roles are African universities to help the continent to overcome the effect of long-term colonization of the continent?

What roles are African universities playing to connect the continent to the new emerging technologies and creating the continent to new knowledge for their development?

The Role of African Universities in Development

TRIPOD MANDATES
(TEACHING< RESEARCH<
EXTENSION/ENGAGEMENT)

Human Capital Development'

- Have contributed immensely to human capital development
- Influenced human development and national development in Africa.
- Engines of national and global developmental change.

Research and Innovation

- knowledge production process of a country.
- knowledge production, transfer, diffusion, learning, absorption, and application processes.

Policy Advice and Consultancy

- Providing forethought to economic development, performance, sustainability, and job creation possibilities through coherent approaches that address the constraints and opportunities across many employment sectors.



Examples of African Universities Contributions to Development:

1. Agriculture and Food Security

- ❑ **Makerere University (Uganda):** Makerere University, through its College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, has been instrumental in research on improving food security in Uganda and beyond. It has contributed to the development of drought-resistant crops and better farming practices that are helping smallholder farmers adapt to climate change.
- ❑ **Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (Nigeria):** The university has made groundbreaking advances in agricultural research, particularly in developing improved crop varieties like cassava, yam, and maize. The school's extension services also help rural farmers implement modern farming techniques.

2. Public Health and Disease Control

- **University of Cape Town (South Africa):** UCT has made vital contributions to global health, particularly in HIV/AIDS research. Its Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine has been a key player in addressing tuberculosis and HIV, developing new treatment regimens that have been adopted internationally.
- **University of Ibadan (Nigeria):** The University of Ibadan's College of Medicine has trained thousands of healthcare professionals and conducted research that has influenced public health policy in Nigeria, including the control of diseases such as malaria and Lassa fever.

Examples of African Universities Contributions to Development:

3. Entrepreneurship and Innovation

- **Stellenbosch University (South Africa):** Stellenbosch University hosts one of Africa's most innovative tech ecosystems, the Stellenbosch University LaunchLab. It supports startups by providing mentorship, funding, and business incubation, fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship in South Africa.
- **Ashesi University (Ghana):** Ashesi has gained a reputation for producing graduates who lead ethically and innovatively. The university's curriculum emphasizes entrepreneurship, leadership, and technological innovation, encouraging students to create solutions to local challenges.

4. Policy Development and Governance

- **University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania):** This institution has been central to national and regional policy development, especially in the post-independence era. It has produced a significant number of Tanzania's political leaders, public administrators, and policy experts.
- **University of Ghana (Ghana):** Through research and advocacy, the University of Ghana's Institute of Statistical, Social, and Economic Research (ISSER) has contributed to shaping economic policies in Ghana and West Africa. Its research on poverty alleviation and development strategies has influenced national policymaking.



Examples of African Universities Contributions to Development:

5. Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution

- **United Nations University for Peace, African Programs (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia):** This university contributes to African peacebuilding efforts by training professionals in conflict resolution, international law, and diplomacy. Graduates have gone on to work with national governments and international organizations like the African Union and the United Nations.
- **University of Nairobi (Kenya):** The university's Centre for Human Rights and Peace contributes to peace initiatives in the East African region. Its students and faculty have played key roles in mediating conflicts, particularly after the 2007-2008 Kenyan post-election violence.

Technology and ICT Development

- **University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa):** Wits University has a strong focus on technology innovation. It played a major role in the development of South Africa's first nanosatellite, ZACUBE-1, which enhances maritime security. The institution also hosts research in artificial intelligence, robotics, and mining technology.
- **University of Lagos (Nigeria):** UNILAG's contributions to the tech industry include producing influential tech entrepreneurs and engineers. The institution's engineering faculty collaborates with industries to develop new technologies in areas such as telecommunications, software development, and renewable energy.



Examples of African Universities Contributions to Development:

. Environmental Conservation and Climate Change

- **University of Nairobi (Kenya):** The university has been actively involved in climate change research and environmental conservation. Its Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies is a leader in research on sustainability and conservation, inspired by Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai's work.
- **University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania):** Researchers here have led initiatives focused on coastal conservation and marine biodiversity, critical for the protection of Tanzania's coastline and livelihoods tied to the Indian Ocean.

Higher Education Capacity Building

PAU – Pan African University

PAU Institutes as follows:

- ❑ **Water and Energy Sciences (including Climate Change) (PAUWES, Algeria);**
- ❑ **Basic Science, Technology and Innovation (PAUSTI, Kenya);**
- ❑ **Life and Earth Sciences (PAULESI, Nigeria);**
- ❑ **Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences (PAUGHSS, Cameroon);**
- ❑ **and Space Sciences (PAUSS, South Africa).**



The Importance of Regional Cooperation and Integration

Maximizing Shared Resources

Promoting Collaborative Research

Facilitating Mobility and Knowledge Exchange

Improving Quality Assurance and Harmonizing Standards

Mitigating the Brain Drain Phenomenon

Advancing Economic and Social Integration

Building Capacity for Policy Formulation

The Roles of the Association of African Universities in promoting regional cooperation and integration

AAU FOCUS

- **A Champion and Advocate for Higher Education in Africa**
 1. AAU advocates for Higher Education for the development of the Africa that we need and the Africa that we want.
 2. Build the capacity of HEIs to be competitive and relevant to national development needs;
 3. Promote and facilitate collaboration and networking among universities across the continent.
 4. Nurture leadership and governance of African HEIs to be adaptive and responsive to emerging conditions and needs

1. AAU promotes regional cooperation and integration by :

- Promoting collaboration among the regional educational networks such as the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA), Southern Africa Regional Universities Association (SARUA), Association of West Africa Universities () etc
- Employs our capacity to bring together university leaders in the five regions of the continent every two years to discuss issues of important to higher education.

2. AAU promotes regional cooperation and integration by

- Organizes capacity building on new development in knowledge, such as Artificial intelligence among others.
- Organizes webinars , and conferences where issues of development and regional integration are addressed.
- Organizes Massive on-line courses, in conjunction with our partners such as Obreal on Regional Integration.

3. AAU promotes regional cooperation and integration by :

- Connects universities in Africa to universities in Latin America and Asia.
- Promote research collaborations among the universities in the continent.
- Collaborates with the African Union Commission in promoting continental initiatives

Empowering Universities as Development Agents



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Empowering Universities:

1. Curricula decolonization and Reforms

- ☐ African universities should be empowered to decolonize their curricula.
- ☐ There is need for curricula reforms in many African universities.
- ☐ Universities such as Ashesi University in Ghana and Stellenbosch University in South Africa have integrated entrepreneurship and leadership into their curricula to foster graduates who can create jobs rather than only seeking employment.



Empowering Universities:

2. Research and Innovation

- ☐ African universities should be empowered to do research relevant to the needs of Africa
- ☐ Efforts should be made to advance our researches to innovations and the development of new technologies.

Empowering Universities:

3.Learner-Centered Teaching and Learning

- ❑ African universities should be empowered to re-orient their learners through evolution of learner-centered methods that promotes innovation and critical thinking.
- ❑ To equip students with practical skills needed in local industries, thereby reducing the skills gap and boosting employability.
- ❑ African Universities should adopt learner-focused teaching methods and embrace technology in teaching and administrative processes.

Empowering Universities:

4. Promote African Values

- ☐ African universities should be empowered to evolve new values of themselves.
- ☐ Promote accountability, responsiveness, ubuntu spirit and Africanisms in their operations.
- ☐ African universities should be empowered to promote new initiatives that will enhance the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship in their programs.
- ☐ Diversity and Inclusion must be promoted to include technical and vocational studies, without neglecting the arts and social sciences, while creating room for all under-privileged and under-represented groups in educational benefits.



Empowering Universities:

5. Public-Private Partnerships

- ❑ Some universities have turned to partnerships with private industries and international donors to address funding gaps.
- ❑ Programs funded by organizations like the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and foreign governments (such as Germany and the U.S.) have been vital in improving infrastructure and building research capacity in specific institutions.

Empowering Universities:

6. Technology, Digitization and ICT Investments:

- ❑ African universities are increasingly embracing digital tools to enhance learning and administrative processes.
- ❑ E-learning platforms and blended learning programs have grown, especially following the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

7.Promote the Centers of Excellence Initiatives

- ☐ The Centre of Excellence initiative is becoming a model for stimulating collaborations among universities and promoting academic -industry linkages.
- ☐ Through this initiatives, cutting edge research are being promoted and the researches are focused at solving societal and industrial problems.
- ☐ Academia – Industry linkages
- ☐ Building future researchers

8. Develop Institutional Policies for Cooperation and Partnership

- There is need to challenge our universities to develop institutional policies that will drive their internationalization and partnership focus.
- Regional cooperation is essential for African universities to fulfill their development role. Collaborative efforts will enhance research, improve quality, and foster regional integration.
- We need to promote South-South-North collaboration.
- These collaborations and partnerships will help enhance their research capacity, facilitate knowledge exchange, and provide access to cutting-edge technologies.

Conclusion

Conclusion

- ❑ The Universities of Africa have for long remained the un-used strength that have been ignored by African governments and their peoples
- ❑ Africa needs to recognize its universities as a critical organ for its development and integration.
- ❑ For universities in Africa to take their rightful place as agents of development and integration, they need to be empowered to overcome some critical challenges that they are currently facing.
- ❑ Together, African universities can drive the continent's sustainable growth.

THANK YOU



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