

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON HIGHER EDUCATION

# Internationalisation of African Higher Education

**Towards Achieving the MDGs**

Chika Schoole and Jane Knight (Eds.)



*SensePublishers*

# **Internationalisation of African Higher Education**

## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Volume 26

Higher education worldwide is in a period of transition, affected by globalization, the advent of mass access, changing relationships between the university and the state, and the new technologies, among others. *Global Perspectives on Higher Education* provides cogent analysis and comparative perspectives on these and other central issues affecting postsecondary education worldwide.

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# **Internationalisation of African Higher Education**

*Towards Achieving the MDGs*

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## **DEDICATION**

This publication is dedicated to those who are working on the study and promotion of the international dimension of higher education as an instrument to advance individual, institutional, national and societal development. Special recognition is given to scholars, policy makers, and activists engaged in applying the internationalisation of higher education as a process to help meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The research reported in this book was conducted by young African scholars. We hope that their work will inspire the next generation of African scholars to examine how international higher education can complement and enhance African efforts to meet the MDGs and encourage further African development.

Jane Knight and Chika Schoole  
Editors



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Jane Knight and Chika Schoole  
Editors



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFDB	African Development Bank
ANIE	African Network for Internationalization of Education
CA	Capability Approach
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFA	Education for All
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GLSS	Ghana Living Standards Survey (Ghana)
HE	Higher Education
IAU	International Association of Universities
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IHE	Internationalisation of Higher Education.
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPOs	International Programs Offices (Ghana)
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ghana)
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty
LECIAD	Legion Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (Ghana)
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOESS	Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (Ghana)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (Ghana)
NAB	National Accreditation Board (Ghana)
NABPTEX	National Board for Professional and Technician Education (Ghana)

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NCTE	National Council for Tertiary Education (Ghana)
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy (Ghana)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OERs	Open Educational Resources
PNDC	Provisional National Defense Council (Ghana)
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UCC	University of Cape Coast (Ghana)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
WACSO	West African Civil Society Organisations
WEF	World Economic Forum

JANE KNIGHT & CHIKA SEHOOLE

## INTRODUCTION

The internationalisation of higher education in Africa can be seen to have a long and rather troubled history if it is interpreted within the context of colonisation or even traditional technical assistance development projects. There is no denying this reality. However, it is equally important to see internationalisation as a contemporary process aiming to contribute to human, social, cultural and economic development of communities and nations. Through strengthening the international dimension of teaching, research, community outreach, and engagement with partners in the region and abroad, higher education is an important agent of change and development. Seen in this light, international education is full of opportunities and potential benefits for individuals, higher education institutions and society at large. But it is important to take an analytical and pragmatic look at the current process of higher education internationalisation and recognise that with benefits come potential risks, and with anticipated positive outcomes come unintended consequences.

The purpose of this book is to explore the role of international higher education as a vehicle for Africa's current development trajectory. The basic premise is that higher education in general, and its international dimension in particular, can play a central role in strengthening and sustaining Africa's growth; particularly with respect to advancing progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Africa faces diverse challenges and higher education institutions have always been depended upon to provide solutions through research that has practical applications and relevance for social, health, economic, environment, education, and other key areas. Secondly, higher education is considered to be an effective way to develop human resource capacity through formal, informal and non-formal education and training programmes. Higher education institutions have a core mandate to establish close links with and serve local and national needs, as well as society at large.

The potential of higher education's contribution to Africa's development remains underdeveloped and often misunderstood. In today's globalised world, which prioritises economic growth through liberalised trade and competitive market strategies, much emphasis has been placed on higher education's ability to produce graduates to serve the labour market and produce new knowledge for the knowledge economy. While these are important contributions, the role and responsibilities of higher education to address human development and social, cultural, health and governance issues should not be neglected. New knowledge produced and applied

to these areas of development is crucial and should not be ignored in favour of knowledge for economic purposes.

#### AFRICAN NETWORK FOR THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF EDUCATION

The African Network for the Internationalisation of Education (ANIE) is a non-governmental organisation committed to promoting greater understanding of how internationalisation can strengthen higher education and ultimately higher education's contribution to the community and society at large. A particular interest of ANIE has been the role of higher education internationalisation in helping to achieve the MDGs. With funding from the Department for International Development in the United Kingdom for the Mobilising Regional Capacities Initiative (MRCI) Project of the Association of African Universities (AAU), and through an open competitive process, a number of young scholars and policy makers were selected to undertake research on how the international dimension of higher education can contribute to African development and in particular the achievement of the MDGs.

The MRCI project was designed to work with emerging scholars and leaders in higher education who are involved in empirical research projects and are producing new knowledge to help meet the MDGs which focus on gender equity, women's empowerment, HIV-Aids and international partnerships. Seven of the successful research projects are reported in this volume. Individually they illustrate how international higher education initiatives such as academic mobility of students and faculty, open educational resources, and international partnerships can help build capacity, enhance access, inform policy, strengthen curriculum, promote social cohesion, and broaden perspectives in African universities. Collectively they point to the need, as well as the potential, for internationalisation to strengthen higher education's role in meeting Africa's development priorities and the MDGs.

'Higher education internationalisation' and the 'Millennium Development Goals' are two constructs which are fundamental to the research and analysis presented in this book. The following sections focus on understanding the MDGs – their origin, purpose and intentions, and secondly, examining the concept and strategies of higher education internationalisation.

#### THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS – ORIGIN AND RATIONALE

At the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2000, heads of state and government took stock of the gross inequalities in human development worldwide and recognised their collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity and equality at the global level. Eight goals were identified and the timeline for achieving them was set for 2015. The eight goals are to: 1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2) achieve universal primary education; 3) promote gender equality and empower

women; 4) reduce child mortality; 5) improve maternal health; 6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7) ensure environmental sustainability, and 8) develop a global partnership for development (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005). These goals, now popularly known as the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have become a universal framework for development and a means for developing countries and their partners to work together in pursuit of a shared future.

At the centre of the MDGs is the notion of development. The scope of the MDGs covers various aspects of human development that go beyond traditional conceptions of development that are normally associated with the economy. The underlying assumption behind these MDGs is that if hunger and poverty can be eliminated; access to education is increased, especially for women and the vulnerable in society; the spread of diseases is combatted; the environment is preserved in a sustainable way; and there is partnership in ensuring the realisation of these goals, then real development can be realised.

The formulation of the MDGs took place during a period when the world was influenced and driven mainly by a neo-liberal economic agenda that was expanding in the form of globalisation. Despite the neo-liberal economic rationales that had taken root in many nation states, the United Nations Millennium Declaration recasts the goal of globalisation to make it a positive force for all the peoples of the world. In its critique of globalisation, the Declaration (United Nations, 2000) notes that “while globalisation offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed” (p. 2). It further notes that developing countries face special difficulties in responding to these central challenges. Contrary to a neo-liberal economic development paradigm, the Millennium Declaration espouses a notion of globalisation and development that is fully inclusive and equitable. It envisages the creation of a shared future based upon a common humanity in all its diversity.

The concept of ‘development’ needs to be unpacked, as it is subject to different interpretations and use depending on the issues at stake. The current and dominant interpretation of ‘development’ is based on an economic framework. Within this perspective, the role of higher education is perceived in a utilitarian way in terms of the creation of new knowledge and training of knowledge workers who are geared solely to serving the economic needs of a country. Higher education is therefore seen as a key strategy to improve the well-being of individuals and the economic development of societies.

The alternative perspective of ‘development’ is non-economic and is rooted in the principles and values of human rights, social justice, freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility. The Declaration locates the pursuit of the MDGs within certain fundamental values that are perceived as being essential to international relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Section 3 of the Declaration includes a commitment to free men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty, thus underscoring the point about the non-economic development paradigm embedded in the MDGs.

It is within this context and approach to development that the eight Millennium Development Goals were crafted. In the pursuit for development and the eradication of poverty, the MDG Declaration set the specific goals that by the year 2015 the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day will be halved, boys and girls will have equal access to all levels of education, maternal mortality will be reduced by three quarters, and the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases that afflict humanity will be significantly reduced. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women was identified as an effective way of dealing with combatting poverty, hunger, disease and "to stimulate development that is truly responsible" (United Nations, 2000, p. 5). Furthermore, the development of strong partnerships between the private sector and civil society organisations in pursuit of poverty eradication is a key strategy of the MDGs.

With the looming 2015 deadline fast approaching, various countries and regions of the world have begun to take stock of progress made in the attainment of these goals (African Union, 2012). It is against this background that the African Network for the Internationalisation of Education (ANIE) undertook research on the international dimension of higher education in Africa and its role in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

#### HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALISATION – MEANING AND STRATEGIES

For centuries, higher education has had an international dimension. Witness the movement of scholars and knowledge around the world since early times, and the concept of 'universe' in the naming of 'universities' as the first formal institutions of higher learning. Fast forward to the twentieth century when international academic relations were strengthened by the founding of worldwide university networks and associations, and the international mobility of students exploded. Yet, the 'internationalisation' of education, a term which has been in use for only about three decades, has fundamentally changed the landscape of higher education in a relatively short period of time. Internationalisation means different things to different people, institutions, and countries. It is driven by a diversity of rationales, finds expressions in a variety of activities, and brings multiple benefits, risks and unintended outcomes.

For some people, higher education internationalisation means a series of international activities such as academic mobility for students and teachers; international linkages, partnerships, and projects; new international academic programmes; and research initiatives. To many, it means cooperating with universities in other countries to reform and modernise curricula and pedagogy. For others it means delivering education to other countries using a variety of face-to-face and distance techniques and new types of arrangements such as branch campuses or franchises. Still others see international development projects or, alternatively, the increasing emphasis on commercial cross-border education as internationalisation. Finally, the term is used to describe regional education hubs, zones, hotspots, education cities, and knowledge villages. Internationalisation is expressed in a

diversity of ways but a key principle is that it respects and is guided by local culture, values and needs.

There is no doubt that globalisation has had an enormous impact on the internationalisation of higher education. Unprecedented developments in information technologies and social media; the pervasive impact of economic liberalisation and trade agreements; the increased flow of people, ideas, capital, values, services, goods and technology across borders are examples of agenda-changing globalisation forces. Internationalisation is different, but closely related to the dynamic process of globalisation. The key concept of *inter-nation* implies relationships between and among countries, people, systems and cultures. This differs significantly from the core concept of *global* or *worldwide flow*, as well as the scope of globalisation. Heated debate continues as to whether globalisation is a catalyst for internationalisation of higher education or conversely, if the internationalisation of higher education is an agent of globalisation. Whatever one's perspective, there is clearly a complex and dynamic relationship between the two processes.

'Internationalisation' is not a new term, nor is the continuing debate about its meaning. The term has been used for years in political science and governmental relations, but its popularity in the education sector has soared only since the early 1980s. Prior to that time, 'international education' and 'international cooperation' were favoured terms, and still are in some countries. For the purposes of this book, a contemporary interpretation of 'higher education internationalisation' is used. This does not ignore the role of colonisation in the past; the intention is to frame the discussion, research and debate on internationalisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century context, with a focus on current issues and challenges such as the MDGs.

The challenge in any definition of internationalisation is the need for it to be generic enough to apply to many different countries, cultures and education systems. This is no easy task. While it is not the intention to develop a universal definition, it is imperative that the term can be used in a broad range of contexts and for comparative purposes across countries and regions of the world. A definition needs to avoid being an instrument that standardises or homogenises higher education internationalisation around the world by specifying the rationales, benefits, outcomes, actors, activities, and stakeholders of internationalisation. These vary enormously across regions, nations, and from institution to institution. What is critical is that the international dimension relates to all aspects of higher education and the role that it plays in society. For the purposes of this book, the focus is squarely on African institutions, communities, countries and their relations with counterparts in Africa and around the world.

For the purposes of this discussion, the internationalisation of higher education is defined as "*the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education*" (Knight, 2008, p. 11). This is intentionally a neutral definition. Many would argue that the process of internationalisation should be described in terms of promoting cooperation and solidarity among nations, improving quality and relevance of

higher education, or contributing to the advancement of human, social, cultural and economic development. While these are extremely important and relevant factors, to which internationalisation can contribute, a definition needs to be objective enough that it can be used to describe a phenomenon which is in fact, universal, but which has different purposes and outcomes, depending on actors, stakeholders and local needs. Central to understanding internationalisation is to see it as an ‘-isation’ or a process. Internationalisation is not an ‘-ism’ or an ‘ideology’ – it is a *process of change*.

Specific terms and concepts have been carefully chosen for this working definition of internationalisation: The term *process* is used deliberately to convey that internationalisation is an ongoing effort and a process of transformation.

Not only has internationalisation transformed the landscape of higher education in the last three or four decades, it has undergone fundamental changes itself. A critical development in the conceptualisation of internationalisation has been the recognition of ‘internationalisation at home’ and ‘cross-border education’ as two pillars of the internationalisation process. The two pillars are closely linked, if not inter-dependent. A brief explanation of each is provided in the following paragraph, since the case study research projects discussed in this book refer to both ‘at home’ concepts such as curriculum innovation, as well as ‘cross-border education’ aspects such as student mobility.

The ‘at home’ concept emerged to give greater prominence to campus-based strategies. These ‘at home’ strategies can include improving the curriculum and the teaching/learning process by including regional and international best practices and resources. ‘Cross-border education’ refers to the movement of people, programmes, providers, policies, knowledge, ideas, projects and services across national boundaries. Delivery modes range from face-to-face to virtual. In the case of Africa, cross-border education can involve collaboration with other higher education institutions within Africa or abroad.

#### OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The first chapter of the book discusses the diverse and unprecedented effects of internationalisation, and acknowledges it as one of the major forces shaping Africa’s higher education in the 21st century. The impact of internationalisation includes new opportunities, challenges and attendant risks – all of which demand closer analysis, understanding and strategic responses. The chapter argues that international higher education and new knowledge must go beyond economic purposes and serve the human and social development needs of the continent, and address the challenges inherent in achieving the MDGs. This chapter discusses the development of internationalisation in Africa, its consequences and implications for Africa’s development, and examines some prospects for the future. It provides the necessary context for understanding the relationship between the MDGs and the international dimension of higher education on the African continent.

The following seven chapters present the selected research case studies and their findings. The first four studies focus on MDG Goal 3 which addresses gender equality and the empowerment of women. The study by Christiana Badoo (Chapter Two) is entitled 'Internationalisation and the challenges of gender equality in higher education: The case of Ghana'. The research rests on the assumption that development empowers people and promotes important changes in their lives, and that higher education is increasingly recognised to be at the heart of the development process. More specifically, higher education can facilitate the participation and empowerment of women in all aspects of the development process. The research considers three important issues: 1) the level of awareness of both students and university administrators of how higher education internationalisation strategies can help Ghanaian public universities to attract and retain more females; 2) the identification of factors that impede enrolment; and 3) strategies that can be used constructively to engage government, policy makers and other regional bodies to focus on providing concrete opportunities for improved access to education for women. Although some efforts have been made in this direction, the results indicate that more needs to be done to strengthen policy and commit additional resources to encouraging females to enrol in higher educational institutions in order to enable Ghana to achieve MDG Goal 3.

Marko Kwarambo and Samson Mukanjari report on their research entitled 'The quest for gender equity through internationalisation strategies at Western Cape higher education institutions in South Africa' in Chapter Three. Their research rests on the assumption that higher education must be viewed as a means of attaining development in Africa through equitable access and the empowerment of women. In the Western Cape Province of South Africa, the universities of Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Western Cape and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology have all embraced internationalisation of higher education to different degrees. This study closely examines the participation of women in international academic mobility and exchange programmes. A range of strategies – both at the university and national government levels are identified as being necessary to sustain the positive trend of African women's engagement with higher education internationalisation initiatives.

In Chapter Four Joshua Eshuchi and Tiafack Ojuku examine in depth the social change impact of study abroad experiences for a group of Kenyan and Cameroonian university students. The critical issue addressed is the effect of an overseas education on gender relations and social change in the family, community and professional lives of the students after they returned home. Results indicate that gender and culture have become increasingly salient issues in socio-economic spheres in Kenya and Cameroon. However, the very nature and structure of these social constructs have become increasingly dynamic, with the influence of globalisation and internationalisation destabilising prevalent conceptualisations and introducing change through the hybridisation of culture. However, traditional Kenyan and Cameroonian conceptions of gender relations and the place of women and men in society persist, even in the face of increasing internal and external destabilisation

of the respective societies. Considerable gender bias was found to persist due to masculine hegemony. There is evidence that a significant shift in gendered social patterns is emerging, with the respondents undertaking great efforts to promote social change. The chapter concludes that while further efforts are needed to change the prevailing masculine hegemony, study abroad experiences for university students can to a certain extent, lead to changes in the conceptualisation of normative gender roles by both female and male students. The study concludes that the overall impact on social structures back home remains limited and continues to be a major challenge, but promise of progress is evident.

The research case study presented in Chapter Five by Laura Nelima Barasa examines the Kenyan Government's education policy and the extent to which it promotes gender equality and empowerment through female students accessing international higher education opportunities offered by Kenyan universities. The opportunities include student mobility, research collaboration, faculty mobility, and joint academic programmes with international partners. The key informants for the study were senior university leaders at two universities in Kenya. The study found that both universities have a gender policy in place. An analysis of whether the gender policy is effective in achieving gender balancing in accessing international higher education opportunities revealed that females have an increased likelihood of participating in these activities. The respondents highlighted the main benefits of participating in international activities, including knowledge sharing, funding opportunities, benchmarking and research diversification. The study concludes that concerted efforts have been made in creating gender equity awareness and as a result, institutions have entrenched gender balancing as an important criterion in selecting participants for international higher education activities. With increased participation of females in these activities, they have greater chances for garnering key management positions in society which demonstrates the use of higher education internationalisation as a tool in helping to achieve MDG 3 in the African context.

The use of mobile phones to enhance women's access to higher education through Open Education Resources is the focus of Chapter Six. The author, Zainab Ruhwanya, contends that for many decades the rate of women's access to higher education in Tanzania has been unsatisfactory. Many factors have contributed to this low access rate, including poverty, access to basic education for the underprivileged, poor learning outcomes at primary and secondary levels, limited access to technology, and the heavy burden of family chores. Many approaches can be used to mitigate against the low access rate for women, such as offering women flexible, affordable, reachable and convenient modes of higher education delivery. Women require learning opportunities which allow work and family responsibilities to be combined with education. A particular tool that allows flexibility in participating in higher education is the use of mobile phones to access Open Educational Resources (OER). Mobile phones and OER are both considered as instruments for expanding access to learning for everyone, including non-traditional groups of students and women. Mobile phones are cost effective and offer flexible access to learning experiences,

and OER provide free and flexible international learning content. Mobile phones and OER are only one strategy that can be used to increase participation of female students in higher learning, and the study demonstrates that they show promise in enabling equal access for both female and male students. There is a need to increase the awareness of key stakeholders about the availability and effectiveness OER, and how various resource repositories and information banks can enrich higher education learning and research through the use of mobile phones.

The research study reported in Chapter Seven focuses on HIV/AIDS, in particular how the internationalisation of university curricula can help to develop increased understanding about the disease and prevent its spread. The case study is Makerere University in Uganda and the researcher is Tibelius Amutuhaire. An examination of the available literature on HIV/AIDS and its prevention shows no systematic attempt to investigate the role played by international higher education in the prevention of HIV/AIDS in Uganda. In the light of this finding, the study investigated the role and contribution of collaborative research and curriculum development with partners in other countries, both within the region and beyond. It concludes that while internationalisation has a role to play in creating increased awareness about HIV/AIDS and its prevention, such strategies remain under-utilised at Makerere University and other universities in Africa. The study recommends that higher education institutions should: 1) adopt an international perspective to mainstream and integrate HIV/AIDS and preventive skills into their curricula; 2) focus on collaborative research to access data and prevention strategies consistent with international conventions; and 3) creatively use the internet and OER to gather information about how to integrate HIV/AIDS awareness into both curricular and extra-curricular activities.

In Chapter Eight the study entitled 'New patterns and impacts of international partnerships in a Kenyan University' by Milton Obamba, Jane Kimbwarata, and Andrew Reichl investigates the changes and increased importance of international higher education partnerships and institutional agreements in the last few decades and their potential to serve the MDGs. The authors discuss how the rise of the global knowledge economy, the increasing internationalisation of higher education, and the growing convergence between the partnership paradigm and knowledge-based narratives of development have resulted in widening and redefining the boundaries of international development cooperation. As a result, international knowledge partnerships have become more embedded in international development thinking and initiatives, and are helping to build local scientific capacity and contribute to human and socio-economic development. This study examines how international partnerships help to build institutional capacity based on a clear alignment with national development priorities. Moi University in Kenya was selected as the case study. The findings demonstrate that the goals and programmes of many international partnerships are increasingly structured to contribute toward the MDGs. The findings also indicate that the partnerships predominantly involve universities in developed countries, not regional institutions. The study identified some essential

characteristics that promote the effectiveness of selected international partnerships and how they can facilitate the achievement of the MDGs. These include taking a multidisciplinary approach; embedding the partnerships firmly into organisational structures; engaging different stakeholder groups, both internal and external to the university; using a practical and pragmatic approach; synchronising activities with development goals; and focusing on the complementarity of expertise rather than equality among the partners. Furthermore, the study found that there are many unresolved issues in the integration of shared and new knowledge into concrete development programmes. This study challenges governments and universities to develop coherent policies and provide adequate resources to ensure a more effective utilisation of new knowledge and its application to development realities, especially the achievement of the MDGs.

The final chapter provides a thematic analysis of the seven country case studies reported in this book. The analysis is based on the premise that higher education, through its mission of teaching, research and community engagement, has the potential to contribute towards meeting the MDGs. The analytical framework used in this chapter is based on the non-economic conception of development to analyse the potential role higher education can play in meeting the MDGs. The case studies of Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, Cameroon and Tanzania have demonstrated how to increase access to higher education through study abroad opportunities, the application of internationalisation policies, and the use of mobile phones, thus creating increased opportunities for women in particular and contributing to meeting MDG 3. The case study of Uganda shows how international partnerships can be used to mitigate against the spread of HIV/AIDs at Makerere University. The study at Moi University in Kenya shows that the growing momentum for international partnerships in most universities is not currently supported by coherent policy frameworks or adequate budgetary allocations.

It is clear that the central argument of the book is that higher education institutions can be engines of development in Africa and have the potential to make a significant contribution to achieving the MDGs through internationalisation initiatives. Whether and how higher education institutions have responded to the MDG goals of women's empowerment, combatting HIV-AIDS, establishing international partnerships, and to what effect, is explored in detail in the case study chapters.

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## CHAPTER 1

JAMES OTIENO JOWI, JANE KNIGHT & CHIKA SEHOOLE

# INTERNATIONALISATION OF AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION: STATUS, CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

## INTRODUCTION

Africa faces several development challenges which have perennially threatened the socio-economic wellbeing of its people and stifled different facets of growth. Africa's quest is to overcome these bottlenecks and take advantage of opportunities for enhanced development. These challenges have been summarised within the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which are discussed extensively in the introduction to this book. According to the Africa Progress Report (2012), there has been encouraging progress towards the attainment of the MDGs, with gains recorded in education, child survival, and the fights against killer diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. However, overall progress remains too slow and uneven, with many Africans still trapped in poverty and marginalisation, while too few benefit from the continent's growth trend. At the same time, the levels of inequality across much of Africa remain profound and unjustified.

Nevertheless, many achievements have been made, for example, Africa has started to turn the corner on reducing poverty. By 2008, the most recent year for which data is available, the number of Africans living on less than a dollar a day had fallen from 58 to 48 per cent. Between 2005 and 2008, the number of poor people in sub-Saharan Africa fell by around nine million. Child mortality also reduced significantly over the same period (Africa Progress Report, 2012). Africa still accounts for the highest levels of poverty internationally; thus the need for rededication to the MDGs. With the 2015 deadline for the MDGs fast approaching, concerted efforts are required to progress towards these targets.

Amongst other sectors, higher education in Africa has an important role to play in meeting the MDGs. Higher education has been identified and recognised as a significant player in facilitating Africa's development process (NEPAD, 2005). In taking the lead, the African Union (AU) has initiated programmes and policies to revitalise higher education in Africa to contribute to the continent's development (AU, 2008).

Higher education in Africa has persistently faced several challenges, particularly with growing societal demands. With few resources, inadequate capacity and a

history of neglect, the sector has been struggling over the years to respond to these increasing demands, leading to ongoing capacity gaps. The sector has also suffered from inadequate funding, weak governance and leadership, low quality of academic programmes, and stifled academic freedom (Mohamedbhai, 2003; Sawyerr, 2004). These challenges require urgent intervention if the sector is to play a meaningful role in the attainment of the MDGs. Given the critical contribution and the role higher education can play in poverty reduction, job creation, research, innovation, knowledge generation, and the creation of just and equitable societies, a daunting task therefore befalls African universities.

In recent years, higher education in Africa has undergone unprecedented transformation, including phenomenal expansion of the sector in terms of numbers and diversity of institutions and academic programmes, rapid growth in enrolments, development of quality assurance frameworks, and enhancement of institutional governance, among other things. These transformations are a consequence of many new developments, both local and global, which have allowed the sector to start regaining its key position in terms of Africa's development.

Amongst the new developments is the growing impact of internationalisation on Africa's higher education sector. The introduction to this book has defined internationalisation and discussed its main rationales, activities and impacts. In its many facets, internationalisation has become a key driver of change in higher education systems globally (Knight, 2008a) and has in recent years attracted considerable debate amongst various stakeholders. At the same time, internationalisation has gained more prominence in the core activities of universities and even become a value in itself (Olson, Green & Barbara 2006).

While internationalisation is not a new phenomenon, in recent years, its complexity has grown, especially due to its varied interpretations, impacts, rationales, activities and consequences. It has thus emerged as one of the defining issues in higher education globally, making it a formidable force that is gaining increasing attention from universities worldwide (IAU, 2010).

Internationalisation is one of the major forces shaping Africa's higher education sector in the 21st century (Jowi, 2010), whose impacts include several opportunities for African universities and societies and even some potential risks. The following sections discuss how internationalisation manifests itself in Africa, some recent developments and responses from African countries, and how these link to the attainment of the MDGs.

## AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

Education is recognised as a necessary condition for development and for creating positive change in societies (McGrath, 2010). It is the engine that drives economic growth, fuels innovations and creates jobs. It also equips people and countries with the skills they need to escape the pull of poverty, build shared prosperity, secure livelihoods and build better health systems.

It is widely accepted that higher education is a leading instrument in promoting development (Cloete, Bailey & Maassen, 2011). This conviction is particularly true for Africa. Right from independence, African founding leaders clearly recognised the important role that high quality higher education could play in building new nations. Thus, since inception, Africa's higher education sector has viewed the developmental role as being core to its mission, purpose and mandate (Sawyerr, 2004). The year 1960, when many African countries were on the threshold of independence, was heralded as the *Year of Africa* and marked what was termed the 'development decade'. The role of the African university in development was strongly emphasised, leading to the establishment of national universities in most of the newly independent countries.

At the UNESCO conference in 1962 and later at the Association of African Universities (AAU) seminar in 1972, this role of the African university was re-emphasised (Yesefu, 1973). However, in the early years of independence, not much was done by African governments or the universities themselves to promote and actualise this pivotal role. This led to universities being seen as ivory towers or luxury ancillaries which were nice to have, but not necessary (Moja, Cloete & Muller, 1996). The infamous World Bank proclamations followed, stating that development efforts in Africa needed to focus on primary education. As a result, there was a decline in public expenditure on tertiary education in sub-Saharan African countries (Cloete et al., 2011).

With the renewed recognition in the late 1990s and early 2000s of the role of higher education in Africa's development, there were calls to revitalise the sector through various initiatives, including international partnerships (Sawyerr, 2004). This coincided with the United Nations Millennium Summit which agreed on new development initiatives and set an ambitious agenda for reducing poverty and improving lives (McGarth, 2010). This global agenda was phrased in terms of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with most targets being set for 2015.

Achieving the MDGs requires developing countries, among other things, to mobilise and organise internal and external resources, and to formulate supportive policies and strategies for coordination and implementation. Apart from the mobilisation of national resources, there is equal emphasis on international resources and the already mentioned role of higher education, which means that the internationalisation of higher education is a key aspect in addressing the MDGs.

Amongst the resources to be mobilised are productive human resources, knowledge, and technology – areas in which education and higher education in particular, play a crucial role in the attainment of the MDGs. Dr Koffi Annan, former United Nations Secretary General, underscored the role of the African university in the continent's development and in the drive to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) when he observed that:

The university must become a primary tool for Africa's development in the new century. Universities can help develop African expertise; they can enhance the analysis of African problems; strengthen domestic institutions; serve as a model environment for the practice of good governance, conflict resolution

and respect for human rights, and enable African academics to play an active part in the global community of scholars (Kofi Annan, quoted by Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2006).

It would thus be unimaginable trying to attain the MDGs in Africa without the involvement of the higher education sector. The centrality of higher education in the achievement of sustainable development was again particularly emphasised at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro. Following this, the United Nations General Assembly declared the period 2005-2014 as the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UN DESD) and assigned UNESCO the responsibility for implementation. This initiative offers a strategic guide for African universities to review their curricula, and develop relevant research programmes and partnerships aimed at the MDGs and other African development agendas (AAU, 2009). Higher education is viewed as having a special responsibility to conduct the scholarship and scientific research necessary for the generation of new knowledge, and to develop new expertise with the emphasis on integrative learning and the ability to apply knowledge and skills to real world settings (AAU, 2009).

The 2009 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education constituted a key moment for African universities (UNESCO, 2009). It redefined the dynamics for these universities, including social relevance and transformation through social, cultural and economic development of societies by means of endogenous capacity building. As a result, through the African Union and continental and regional university associations, African governments embarked on initiatives to foster and benefit from intra-Africa university collaborations and other international partnerships. Consequently, in the same year 2009, in determining the role of the African university in Africa's development, the Association of African Universities (AAU) chose the theme *Sustainable development in Africa- The role of higher education* for its 12<sup>th</sup> General Conference held in Abuja, Nigeria. The conference recognised the many efforts African universities had made towards sustainable development, but urged universities to combine their efforts with international partners in order to maximise the effectiveness of responses to Africa's development needs.

The African Union Second Decade of Education Action Plan has prioritised higher education as an area for Africa's development, with an emphasis on knowledge generation through centres of excellence, quality assurance, harmonisation, regional integration, and resource mobilisation (AU, 2008). The plan recognises that Africa has a large and growing higher education sector that can be harnessed to respond effectively to the MDGs (AAU, 2009; Jowi, 2012).

Universities have played an important role in responding to disparities in basic life chances in terms of health, education, food provision, and participation in society, which are preventing millions of Africans from realising their potential. While universities may be weak in many African countries, they are often the only national institutions with the skills and capacity not only to develop new knowledge, but also to adapt knowledge developed in other contexts to local contexts (Sawyer, 2004).

## INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Even though internationalisation is not an entirely new phenomenon in African higher education, Africa is viewed as a late comer to the arena of contemporary internationalisation. Teferra (2008) traces higher education and internationalisation in Africa to pre-colonial days when some knowledge centres had begun to flourish in the continent. This history is affirmed by Ajayi, Goma and Johnson (1996) who delve into the indigenous roots and long experience of institutionalised higher education and internationalisation in Africa before western control, a fact reflecting the deep history of internationalisation in Africa. Teferra (2008) further discusses the role that internationalisation has played in the growth and development of higher education in Africa.

Thus internationalisation has been part of Africa's higher education sector since the formative years, reflected in Africa's colonial legacy (Teferra, 2008) and the development trajectories of African higher education in recent years. While we have broad knowledge about the colonial inheritance of the modern day African university, we need to investigate the contribution of this legacy to current-day internationalisation of higher education in Africa. Furthermore, there is no doubt that the growth and development of the higher education sector in Africa have been notably influenced by internationalisation, with varied consequences including several opportunities, challenges and even risks. These are discussed in the later sections of this chapter.

While internationalisation in Africa may be as old as the continent's higher education system, its new manifestations and impacts are unprecedented. The main rationales, drivers, benefits and risks of internationalisation vary a great deal in Africa compared to other world regions. This, as Teferra (2008) argues, could be due to Africa's peculiar historical, social, economic and political context. While most world regions have strategically engaged with internationalisation for some decades and made it an explicit, coordinated and strategically focused activity, Africa has responded to internationalisation in an ad-hoc way and treated it as a marginalised activity with little strategic planning and limited support (Jowi, 2009).

Due to the inevitability of internationalisation, African universities have begun to acknowledge that it can no longer be side-lined, but should increasingly be a central part of university activities. Even though the move to actualise this approach is rather slow, it is crucial for African universities to benefit from the unique opportunities of internationalisation, while at the same time responding to its challenges and risks.

The dynamic nature of internationalisation and the equally dynamic global context in which it operates hold particular implications for African countries. The complexity of the phenomenon makes it difficult for individual countries, let alone institutions, to adequately respond to its many challenges, opportunities and even risks. Institutions, countries and even regions pursue internationalisation with different motivations. The main motivations for African universities to embrace internationalisation are research outputs, knowledge production and the strengthening of institutional capacity (Jowi, 2010). Internationalisation offers

opportunities in the form of cross-border education, student and staff mobility, institutional partnerships, and collaboration, among other things. Such rationales for, or goals of internationalisation are continuously evolving and vary from region to region and from institution to institution. If well utilised, internationalisation opportunities can contribute significantly to the attainment of the MDGs in Africa.

#### INTERNATIONALISATION AND THE MDGS IN AFRICA

The turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed attempts at revitalising higher education in Africa, with growing interest in the sector from internal and external stakeholders and partners (Oyewole, 2010). The role of the African university in sustainable social, political and economic development has been widely acknowledged (Sawyerr, 2004; McGarth, 2010). This recognition puts the higher education sector in Africa in a central position in terms of the attainment of the MDGs. Achieving the MDGs in Africa holds the promise of saving millions of lives; empowering women; addressing illiteracy, hunger and malnutrition; and ensuring that Africa's youth have access to quality education and adopt good health practices in order to lead productive lives.

The link between higher education, internationalisation and the MDGs must be considered in the light of broader debates surrounding higher education and development. The ascendancy of neo-liberal economic policies has been accompanied by the emergence of knowledge economies, thus underlining the value of knowledge in the field of development. Knowledge economies place more value on the production and absorption of knowledge. Research and Development (R&D) capacities and the availability of highly-skilled knowledge workers who produce and absorb knowledge often created elsewhere, have become major factors that accelerate economic growth and improve national competitiveness. In this regard, the challenges of meeting the eight MDGs have put higher education institutions, as knowledge producers, at the forefront, thus highlighting their critical role in finding solutions to the MDG challenges.

The challenges could be addressed through conducting relevant research in areas related to the MDGs, developing policies and frameworks to address the challenges posed by the MDGs, proposing strategies for the mobilisation of resources to address the MDGs, and suggesting preventative measures to mitigate against their potential negative effects. These perspectives assume that universities will embrace the challenge of addressing the MDGs of their own accord.

However, despite the growth and expansion of the higher education sector in Africa, African universities cannot adequately respond to the MDGs on their own. Knowledge and expertise generated in African universities is important, but may not be sufficient to address the requirements or demands of these goals. Institutions need to be able to count on the sustained commitment of the global knowledge society. The international dimension of higher education and the opportunities that it offers therefore become essential in supplementing the efforts of African universities.

Strong and proactive international partnerships within the higher education sector therefore play a crucial role in addressing these goals (Bloom et al., 2006).

Some of the main outcomes of internationalisation and globalisation are the growth in interdependence, interconnectedness, partnerships, and mobility across global communities. These new developments enable global challenges and achievements to transcend national boundaries (Koehn & Rosenau, 2010) and require sustainable solutions which need to be addressed collectively. Partnerships across national and disciplinary boundaries are thus rapidly emerging (King, 2008). This trend was succinctly affirmed at the 2009 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education which stressed the role of higher education and research in the future growth of Africa, identified priority areas, and recommended strategies for the mobilisation of resources to revitalise African universities (UNESCO, 2009).

As a result, partnerships between universities, already an important aspect of internationalisation, were recognised as being crucial, leading to new forms of collaboration in research, knowledge generation, and institutional strengthening, among other things (Shabani, 2010). Through internationalisation, universities are becoming increasingly strategic actors in Africa's development (King, 2008). Recent key African policy publications illustrate the importance of transnational knowledge partnerships (AfDB, 2008), such as North-South and South-South research collaborations to boost local knowledge production. Such partnerships support African universities in developing strategies rooted in national contexts, but enriched by international knowledge. The academic rationale has been the most important, epitomised by the need to enhance research and institutional academic capacities (Knight, 2008b; IAU, 2010).

Internationalisation thus supports Africa in harnessing the power of science, technology and innovation to transform its societies. Key areas to be addressed relating to the MDGs include poverty, health, biodiversity, biotechnology, indigenous knowledge, energy, water and the environment. North-South university partnerships are based on research capacity building, institutional development programmes, and capacity building in specific areas such as governance, ICT and infrastructure, among others (Zezeza, 2012). The following focus areas depict some of the ways in which internationalisation could support the attainment of the MDGs in Africa.

### *Enhancing Research Capacity*

Research has become a major driver of internationalisation, especially in Africa where academic research activity remains weak due to quality challenges, weak institutional capacity for research, and inadequate funding, among other factors. Research outputs and knowledge production are vital for Africa's sustainable socio-economic development and for addressing almost all the MDGs. Internationalisation can help to address the low research capacity of many African universities through research partnerships and collaboration, and other capacity building initiatives.

International cooperation has an impact on research quality (King, 2008) and can lead to new and innovative knowledge to address development challenges. It provides opportunities for researchers to participate in international research networks which can improve the quality of the research environment, funding, research infrastructure and incentives (Sehoole, 2008). The creation of international research communities can contribute to solving local challenges, thus addressing the MDGs.

Research partnerships can also infuse African researchers into the global higher education system, underscoring the fact that apart from being local, universities are also regional and international resources that need to be globally connected. Universities can harness research activities to respond to the significant data gaps that have weakened MDG progress reporting. The evidence base for tracking poverty and inequality remains partial and incomplete in many countries; hence the impetus for universities to work with governments to strengthen national reporting systems.

Investigating progress on key MDG areas such as hunger and malnutrition are areas where higher education research networks in agriculture, such as the Regional Universities Forum on Agriculture (RUFORUM), have a clear responsibility. Through collaborative research activities, universities have, and can continue to develop effective and sustainable interventions. For example, university partnerships have demonstrated impressive advances in research to combat infectious diseases. In the last ten years, international partners have invested massively in researching malaria, tuberculosis, child survival, and HIV/AIDS, thus enabling African countries to scale up interventions to prevent and treat these diseases (Africa Progress Report, 2012).

Support programmes such as the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria have provided resources for universities to work collaboratively on health issues. This fund alone provided Africa with \$12 billion between 2002 and 2010, with a significant percentage going to research centres in universities (Africa Progress Report, 2012).

### *Curriculum and Learning Outcomes*

Internationalisation has the potential to strengthen the curriculum in many African universities and thus also contribute to the quality of the learning outcomes. Enhancement of the curriculum through internationalisation could contribute to designing high quality programmes and infusing new and relevant knowledge appropriate for addressing the MDGs. Through international partnerships, African universities have developed new programmes and reviewed existing curricula in terms of their relevance. The African Union views it as pivotal that the African higher education community should review its curricula, set and undertake development activities, undertake relevant scientific research, and establish partnerships towards social, economic and inter-regional equity in commitment to the MDGs and other African development agendas (AAU, 2009).

*Institutional and Faculty Development*

Most African universities suffer from weak internal governance and management (Mohamedbhai, 2008) which negates potential progress towards internationalisation. Building institutional governance and management capacity is essential for fostering partnerships and collaborations, and implementing internationalisation activities. Through internationalisation, African universities can adapt and develop more effective and efficient management practices in order to optimise their interventions in terms of the MDGs.

Internationalisation is also important in strengthening human resource capacity in African universities. It can contribute to producing the highly skilled workforce needed to foster local development, and generating knowledge required to address issues key to the MDGs. African governments and international partners can contribute to this endeavour by supporting emerging centres of excellence and new mobility programmes, and establishing quality doctoral programmes within the continent. Continuous enhancement and the upgrading of knowledge have been recognised as priority areas (Oyewole, 2010) for comprehensive planning and investment in African universities. The universities face the challenge of recruiting, training and retaining adequate levels of qualified academic staff. This challenge is aggravated by the ‘brain drain’ and an absence of sustainable staff development programmes (Hayward, 2010).

*Community Engagement and Development*

According to the Africa Progress Report (2012), most Africans still live in rural villages which are marginalised and where poverty and inequalities are rampant. Thus universities in Africa embrace community engagement as being key to their mission, and as a means to use their resources, knowledge and other capacities to change the lives of rural communities. Capacities, knowledge and resources gained through international collaborations and partnerships have been inestimably useful in addressing community challenges. In fact, many university partnership projects target local communities (Wiewel & Broski, 1997), thus enhancing the local relevance of universities. Internationalisation can play an important role in alleviating local community challenges and spurring growth and better lives amongst rural communities – a cardinal requirement for the attainment of the MDGs. University initiatives in health, agriculture, water and sanitation, and environmental protection have changed livelihoods in communities (Africa Progress Report, 2012).

*Skills and Expertise Development*

Internationalisation has the potential to support the pursuit of well-trained and skilled expertise in African universities and other core sectors in terms of Africa’s growth and development. Internationalisation has already made an enormous contribution to the development of Africa’s skilled expertise, and holds the potential

to alleviate Africa's skills deficit. Many African scholars have attained at least one of their academic qualifications abroad (Oyewole, 2010). However, Africa still lacks capacity and expertise in several crucial sectors. The situation is further negatively impacted upon by the significant impacts of the brain drain (Hayward, 2010) at a time when postgraduate enrolments are not growing commensurately (Tettey, 2009) with the need to replace the ageing cohort of pioneer African academics.

This presents an urgent need for African universities to invest in the development of the new generation of scholars, including improved quality of teaching and research (Hayward, 2010). The technical expertise gained from training supported through international collaborations and partnerships could enable Africa to address key areas for the attainment of the MDGs, such as increased access to clean water and sanitation, improvements in health, food security, and preservation of the environment. Internationalisation has offered opportunities through study abroad programmes for skills development in specialised areas. It has also supported local institutions to develop local capacity for skills development.

### *Information Communication and Technology (ICT)*

New developments in ICT in Africa present unprecedented opportunities for African universities regarding their role in addressing the MDGs. ICT holds the promise of helping Africa 'leapfrog' over infrastructural insufficiencies and other barriers that developed countries have overcome on their development path. Among other things, ICT provide innovative opportunities for teaching, learning and research in Africa. Over the last decade, internet usage in Africa has increased by over 2000 per cent. In addition, between 2005 and 2010, international internet bandwidth in Africa increased 20 fold. Even more impressive is the rate at which mobile telecommunications are growing (Africa Progress Report, 2012).

Even though the ICT infrastructure remains inadequate, costly and poorly managed (Gakio, 2006), the terrain is quickly changing. Several African countries are making positive strides which present many possibilities for partnerships and collaborations between African universities and universities in other regions. This growth has opened up new frontiers in teaching and learning, in particular, the use of open educational resources, distance education, and e-learning. New opportunities have emerged to disseminate and share African research in an economically sustainable way and with wider reach. This modern and constantly evolving information technology landscape provides several opportunities to different cadres of Africans, with clear links to addressing the MDGs.

### *Strengthening African Networks and Partnerships*

Traditionally, African universities have developed partnerships and collaborations mainly with Northern partners, with little collaboration between African universities themselves. The new initiatives towards enhanced academic exchanges,

harmonisation of academic programmes, strengthening intra-Africa co-operation, and the realisation of African Higher Education and Research Space (AHERS) afford increased capacity for African universities to address Africa's challenges in different areas. Apart from enhancing capacity to collectively respond to the MDGs, they also provide a pedestal for universities to decide on their development agenda and priorities for internationalisation, including handling some of the risks of internationalisation. Intra-Africa collaborations also foster mobility, academic exchanges, quality assurance mechanisms, and research networks (Shabani, 2008), which are important for fostering enhanced internationalisation in Africa.

In both the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and East African Community (EAC) regions, students from partner states can now study in universities within each region and pay the same fees as local or home students. This is an example of fostering mobility and exchanges within regions, providing opportunities for developing and harnessing regional capacities for development and responding to the MDGs.

#### *Development of New Knowledge*

The spread of new knowledge offers possibilities for improvements in the quality of life, especially in developing countries, by addressing perennial impediments to knowledge generation and utilisation. Access to new knowledge through internationalisation is therefore pivotal in order to apply such knowledge to addressing the MDGs. Through knowledge generated from institutional partnerships, African countries have an opportunity to transform their internal resources to be useful for their people, especially those who continue to be trapped in poverty. Such knowledge should also enable universities to design programmes to utilise their research capacities and knowledge resources efficiently in order to transform the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable in society.

Internationalisation fosters the development of trans-boundary agreements in the form of concerted efforts towards the pursuit, advancement and harnessing of Africa's indigenous knowledge for societal development. As African societies grow and change, knowledge generated from other parts of the world may not be a panacea for all challenges. African scholars and scientists thus need to use internationalisation to develop locally relevant knowledge for local challenges, which also applies to addressing the MDGs. An example of locally relevant research outcomes is the explosion in mobile telephone usage in Kenya and the many opportunities this technology offers to poor people in particular.

#### *Enhancement of Access and Academic Quality*

Africa is in the midst of a profound demographic shift with its population growing faster than any other world region, and the youth forming the majority (Jowi, 2012). This hopeful outlook may turn into a disaster if children and young people do not

have access to quality education at all levels. Growing numbers of primary school enrolments will require commensurate expansion in the numbers of classrooms and teachers (Africa Progress Report, 2012).

The scale of the educational divide that separates Africa and other world regions is almost inestimable, and the gap can only be bridged by the effects of collective action. One of the areas for collective action is to expand access to education. Enrolment rates in tertiary education in most of Africa are at an average of just 6% (Jowi, 2012). Africa has dramatically increased access to primary education, although there are still 30 million children out of school in Africa. Compared to all world regions, enrolment in Africa's higher education sector is the fastest growing. Some of the barriers to increased access to education can be addressed through partnerships and enhanced international support that can create new learning opportunities. Overcoming these barriers to education also requires institutional reforms, an area where experience gained through internationalisation can continue to be useful. These are key areas for attention and action in the drive towards the attainment of the MDGs.

#### RENEWED INTEREST

The MDGs are part of a two-way compact between developing and developed countries, in which international support plays a critical role. In 2005, at the G8 summit in Gleneagles, international partners made commitments to increase support to developing countries towards the achievement of the MDGs (MDG Africa Steering Group, 2008). Education is central to the attainment of almost all the MDGs. Thus the Global Campaign for Education has called on the donor community to allocate 10 per cent of overall aid to education in developing countries (McGarth, 2010).

Over the last two decades, higher education in Africa has attracted increasing attention both locally and internationally. Governments, multilateral development agencies and policy makers are acknowledging the critical importance of universities in Africa's transformation and development. They agree that knowledge can be used as a tool to respond to development challenges. Higher education has thus attracted significant levels of support from various bilateral and multilateral sources, in addition to investment at the national level.

In 2009 alone, sub-Saharan Africa received US\$720 million in education lending, making it the second largest recipient of World Bank lending for education after the Caribbean (World Bank, 2010). Between 2000 and 2010, five US-based private foundations supported 638 partnership projects in Africa, at a total cost of \$400 million (Lewis, Friedman & Schoneboom, 2010). During the same period, a number of leading inter-governmental agencies, including USAID and the World Bank, were projected to invest another US\$590 million in support of 239 collaborative projects across the continent, while the top 10 leading OECD bilateral donors financed

approximately 270 projects at a cost of several million dollars (Maassen, Pinheiro & Cloete, 2007).

Similarly, since 2000, the AAU has been implementing the 10-year Renewing the African University Programme at a cost of US\$5 billion, and (since 2005) the Core Programme valued at US\$20 million (Mohammedbhai, 2008). These examples provide a glimpse into the existing levels of international support to higher education in Africa. Most of these projects target health, the environment, agriculture and food security, and governance, and are geared to the achievement of the MDGs. Many multi-level partnerships among African universities and various stakeholders are anchored on the outcomes of the two UNESCO World Conferences on Higher Education (UNESCO, 1998; 2009). Different world regions are strengthening their partnerships with Africa. More recently, the Africa-Europe White Paper called on African and European universities to “integrate development cooperation into the overall internationalisation strategy” (EUA, 2010, p. 21). This call is within the framework of the joint Africa-EU strategy, which provides long-term frameworks for cooperation. The historic Africa-EU Summit in Cairo in 2000 recognised the importance of higher education and research in tackling the challenges of Africa (Shabani, 2008). European Union (EU) mobility schemes such as the intra-Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States programme are enhancing student exchanges within Africa through the Nyerere Scholarship Programme, the Pan Africa University initiative, and various new developments towards harmonisation and tuning of degree programmes in Africa.

Africa-US higher education initiatives (including the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa) have also made significant contributions. Emerging countries in Southeast Asia and South America are establishing strong collaborations with higher education in Africa, and China-Africa cooperation is gaining momentum. These initiatives are already impacting on Africa’s higher education sector, and strengthening relations between African institutions and those in the respective world regions. The new patterns of transnational cooperation create more opportunities for development and revitalisation of Africa’s higher education sector (Jowi, 2009), particularly considering that most African countries have substantially cut down public spending on university education due to decades of widespread macroeconomic and fiscal instability (Shabani, 2010).

Emerging countries such as China, India and Brazil are becoming new players in internationalisation and challenging traditional North-South relations. As the economic growth pole moves east, Africa stands to gain from strengthened cooperation with China and other emerging economies. These new relationships are much more complex and varied, with a host of new players joining the field. Innovations and support to countries’ higher education systems will impact on Africa’s future developments and change the patterns of aid dependence. The global economic slowdown, particularly in Europe, may negatively impact on these initiatives in several ways, especially because Europe has traditionally been a key partner in collaborations with Africa.

## AFRICA'S RESPONSES

African countries have been so close, yet so far from their neighbours in terms of institutional collaboration and partnerships. The emerging global realities in international education in recent years have compelled Africa to take deliberate steps to engage with internationalisation (Jowi, 2010) and the demands of the knowledge society by developing a number of new initiatives to respond to internationalisation within the continent. The goal is to strengthen relations between African universities through collaboration, exchange and the development of supportive frameworks to strengthen Africa's capacity to deal with its own circumstances and develop platforms for international engagements. These developments have been at multiple levels.

At the continental level, since the establishment of the African Union (AU) in 2002 and its socio-economic programme, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), cooperation within Africa and with other world regions, in different sectors including education, has developed and diversified rapidly. One of the main developments is the new policy direction aimed at strengthening Africa's Higher Education and Research Space (AHERS). As a result, the African Union, NEPAD and regional higher education organisations have accorded higher education a central role, especially in relation to capacity building for knowledge production, innovation and development. This has provided more ground for increased collaboration between African universities and with universities in other world regions, thus providing more opportunities, capacity and resources to address the MDGs.

These new developments foster internationalisation amongst African universities through mobility programmes and frameworks for capacity building. Intra-African university partnerships could contribute towards enhancing Africa's capacity to respond to the MDGs and also repositioning Africa as a player in the global knowledge society. The African Union aims to create and strengthen Africa's higher education and research capacity, as epitomised in the *Second Decade of Education in Africa* (AU, 2008). This initiative focuses on the role of research in addressing Africa's chronic challenges which are so neatly encompassed in the MDGs. It views regional integration as a key step towards integration of African countries into the global economy, while at the same time bringing convergence to the continent's diversely structured higher education systems. As a result, the formerly defunct Arusha Convention has been revived with the aim of harmonising academic programmes in Africa for enhanced collaboration, quality assurance, structural convergence, compatibility, recognition, and transferability of degrees across borders (AUC, 2011).

One flagship development is the establishment of the Pan African University (PAU), with centres spread across Africa. This is an attempt to enhance collaboration and co-operation between African countries, while at the same time developing the next generation of African scholars through research and postgraduate training (AU, 2008) in fundamental and development-oriented areas. In addition, the promulgation

of the Accra Declaration and its quest for increased opportunities for academic cooperation in Africa (AAU, 2004) led to the establishment of the Mwalimu Nyerere Student Mobility Programme in 2007 to promote internal student mobility. These initiatives are useful in developing Africa's capacities for enhancing responses to the various MDGs.

Besides the continental level, internationalisation in Africa is beginning to take a regional dimension, influenced mainly by regional economic blocks and regional university organisations, networks and partnership programmes. These are evident within the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Inter University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) and the Southern Africa Regional Universities Association (SARUA) respectively are undertaking initiatives towards harmonisation, regional quality assurance frameworks and academic exchanges all of which can also enhance responses to the MDGs. These initiatives have focused on relevant research and enhancement of academic quality which are important ingredients for societal development.

Regional research networks and organisations such as the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) also support regional universities in joint research programmes, staff exchanges and capacity building. These initiatives have been augmented by international research organisations and other transnational organisations and foundations.

Efforts are being made at regional and sub-regional levels to harmonise higher education in Africa, in particular improving mutual recognition of degrees and academic mobility (Jowi, 2009). There are also attempts to respond to the perennial challenges of the brain drain and other areas of weakness in order to move Africa from being a bystander to a player in the process of development. These drives towards internationalisation are paving the way for change and reform in Africa's higher education sector – a frontier that has for years been in a slumber. Such initiatives will open up various countries and regions for more collaborative engagement in higher education and development activities. It is inspiring to witness increased cooperation between Africa and other parts of the world, which at the same time stimulates governments and institutions to start working on strategies for internationalisation.

#### SOME PITFALLS AND CHALLENGES

Internationalisation offers substantial benefits for higher education in Africa and, by extension, for the broader development agenda of the continent. While internationalisation can contribute not only to Africa's development, but also to attainment of the MDGs, it also presents some risks and challenges which need to be addressed so that they do not negate some of the benefits.

African universities recognise a number of risks associated with internationalisation (IAU, 2010). One of the main risks to Africa's higher education sector is the brain

drain which continues to weaken the already meagre human resource capacity in African universities. Other risks include the commercialisation of higher education and the imposition of foreign or irrelevant curriculum and policies in African higher education systems (Jowi, 2009).

Apart from the risks, African universities face a number of challenges in their attempts to respond to internationalisation. As home to the largest number of developing countries, Africa faces a multiplicity of drawbacks in its engagement with internationalisation (Jowi, 2009). African universities identify the brain drain as a major risk of internationalisation. Attainment of the MDGs requires that African universities develop and retain the best talent (Schoole, 2011), but the brain drain has eroded their capacity to contribute meaningfully to the MDGs. The growing migration of African staff and students to industrialised economies is becoming chronic. Africa cannot expect to successfully integrate in and benefit from the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy without developing and retaining its well educated workforce (Schoole, 2011).

Institutional weaknesses, including the absence of institutional internationalisation strategies, are another challenge to internationalisation in Africa. In order to maximise the benefits of internationalisation, including efforts towards attaining the MDGs, African universities need to make internationalisation a priority area and plan for it strategically. Other challenges include inadequate funding, rapid expansion of the higher education sector, weak governance structures, quality concerns, and poor regulatory mechanisms which make Africa more vulnerable to global forces (Mohamedbhai, 2003). Africa's higher education sector is perhaps the most marginalised in the world (Teferra, 2010), but probably the most affected by the impacts of internationalisation. African universities face considerable challenges in generating, accessing and disseminating knowledge, making it even more difficult for them to make meaningful responses, not only to the challenges in their environments, but also to the issues posed by internationalisation and the requirements of the MDGs.

Due to weak local capacity, Africa's scholarship continues to be shaped largely by Euro-American intellectual paradigms, and theoretical, epistemic, and methodological orientations that are likely to reproduce and reinforce Western knowledge. This lopsided global knowledge and innovation system, with its centre in the industrialised world, is not desirable for Africa's future. In this context, another challenge confronting African universities is how to maintain local relevance while simultaneously responding adequately to the demands of increasing internationalisation. At a more fundamental level, North-South partnerships have been critiqued as reproducing traditional patterns of economic and geopolitical dependency (Zezeza, 2005). At the same time, Africa remains heavily under-represented in global institutions and constrained by unfair rules which it does not have the power to change. These are grounded particularly in the dominance and economic power of the global North (Jowi, 2009).

Funding remains a major challenge for enhanced internationalisation in Africa (Jowi, 2009) and also for the attainment of the MDGs. Bilateral partners need to streamline

the way partnerships are funded and managed. Introducing a meaningful and sustainable international dimension requires sustainable funding; thus funding is an important focus area in pursuing successful internationalisation and attainment of the MDGs.

Weak research capacity is another challenge facing African universities in terms of both internationalisation and the quest to contribute to the MDGs. Most African universities lack the baseline scientific and research capacities and infrastructure required to collaborate on a more equitable footing with their partners in more advanced countries. Africa spends an insignificant 0.3% of its total GDP on research and has the lowest number of scientists in research and development in the world (Teferra, 2010). Unsurprisingly, Africa accounts for less than 1.5% of total global publications in scientific journals (Oyewole, 2010), most of which emanate from three countries – Egypt, South Africa and Nigeria. This low level of research activity has contributed to Africa's marginalisation, thus making research collaboration a strategic priority, both regionally and with international partners.

Other negative consequences of internationalisation include the imposition of inappropriate policies, adoption of inappropriate educational models, manipulation of research agendas, concerns related to intellectual property, and feelings of superiority from international partners – especially commercial providers taking advantage of weak regulatory mechanisms in Africa. These have led to varied negative outcomes in different country systems.

Transnational partnerships between Africa and developed countries tend to be characterised by traditional inequalities, and dominance of the global North, particularly if such efforts are not based on strong ethical values. Inequalities between national systems and even within nations have increased over recent decades. Thus African universities still face serious challenges in their quest to respond to the risks and take advantage of the opportunities presented by internationalisation.

## CONCLUSION

Africa has an unprecedented opportunity to set a course for sustained economic growth, shared prosperity, and breakthroughs in poverty reduction. But this journey will not be successful without determined action, especially towards attainment of the MDGs. The cardinal role of African universities in sustainable social, political and economic development is no longer contestable. They have a pivotal role to play in the attainment of the MDGs. The benefits of internationalisation are clear and the fact that it can contribute to the attainment of the MDGs in Africa is also discernible. Recognition of the essence and impact of internationalisation has triggered Africa to initiate various continental and regional bodies and frameworks for the purpose of enhancing internationalisation.

Despite many obstacles and a turbulent past, Africa is growing in positive directions and making gains towards the attainment of the MDGs. This growth is evident in many sectors, including higher education. Over the past decade, six of the world's ten fastest growing economies are in Africa. Africa's economies are now

growing at twice their growth rates of the 1990s. For the first time in a generation, the number of people living in poverty has fallen (Africa Progress Report, 2012, p. 8). Africa's enthusiasm for technology is also spurring this growth spurt, expanding opportunities and connecting people with one another.

Even though internationalisation is multi-layered and presents many challenges, these can be surmounted through the involvement of both local and international partners. Thus, renewed commitment to the revitalisation of African higher education systems requires ongoing support. Africa's internationalisation strategies need to be double-pronged, with a focus on intra-Africa co-operation as well as reaching out for strategic international partnerships. Such an approach, if well structured, co-ordinated and supported, could promote the benefits and minimise the risks of internationalisation for Africa.

The endemic challenges and risks associated with Africa's higher education sector and its internationalisation efforts require attention. The tremendous expansion of the system and the rapid growth in enrolments could be favourable for Africa if turned into an opportunity to address the MDGs, amongst other things. Africa has one of the most youthful populations, an inestimable resource which, if equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills, could transform global knowledge relations. Africa has not much option but to respond to these realities and turn internationalisation into an opportunity for growth.

It is important that Africa's development partners support this renewal process in African higher education. Continued funding and greater focus on the quality and outcomes of internationalisation initiatives remain critically important, as is continuous assessment of the impacts of internationalisation. At the same time, the programmes and policies that African institutions formulate to enhance the success of internationalisation, especially relating to the MDGs, should be strategic priorities. Internationalisation can ultimately leverage the collective efforts of African universities and their partners to develop a new generation of thinkers and solutions for Africa's challenges.

The internationalisation of higher education in Africa is an emerging reality which has a role to play in Africa's development, but this role needs to become more visible. This need calls for a new trajectory to empower African universities to reconceptualise internationalisation in their own terms and use it to fit into their own development agendas. Even considering the current growth levels visible in the continent, the challenges facing Africa are huge and demand concerted efforts from all partners.

Although times are uncertain, it is increasingly evident that Africa is on its way to becoming a potential pole for global growth, and a place of immense innovation and creativity. Slowly but steadily, the economic and governance situations in Africa are changing. Intra-Africa engagements, collaboration and reforms in different areas, including higher education, are taking root, bringing positive indications for internationalisation. If Africa's universities, governments, key stakeholders and international partners respond with courage, the continent might become more

prosperous, fair and equal. While it is true that Africa's future will be shaped by its people, the international dimension, especially in higher education, cannot be ignored; especially the manner in which it interacts with the social and economic currents that are redefining African countries.

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