

Strategic Orientations for Higher Education and Research in Africa

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Within the framework of its activities, the UNESCO-ADEA Task Force for Higher Education and Research in Africa has elaborated a set of strategic orientations from a collection of documents and studies concerning the main priorities of this sector. This work benefit also of the conclusions and recommendations elaborated during the Regional Conference for Higher Education in Africa (Conférence Régionale pour l'Enseignement Supérieur en Afrique - CRESA) held in Dakar-Senegal in November 2008.

The proposed strategic orientations are the following:

On financing of higher education

Sustainable growth in Africa is contingent on the capacity of States to diversify their economies, and to thus train human capital that will help carry out and support this transformation. In this process, higher education plays a key role in training qualified individuals who will be capable of implementing new technologies and using innovative methods to establish more efficient enterprises and institutions

Ensuring the quality of tertiary education in Africa requires a funding policy that not only can ensure its sustainability but also can provide the incentives to increase efficiency, promote a more equitable access and orient the institutions toward the needs of the economy

Build ownership and consensus for reforms

Improve the information and the indicators and provide the necessary instruments

Improve funding and other support for regional initiatives

National commitment should be made to higher education through adequate budgetary allocation. African governments should allocate more resources (at least 20% of the national budget) to education in accordance with the spirit and letter of the African Union Plan for the Second Decade of Education in Africa, while prioritizing the sub-sector.

Encourage cost-sharing or cost-recovery in higher education and the diversification of funding sources

An African Higher Education Trust Fund should be established to supplement the efforts of African governments and institutions to expand and strengthen higher education institutions.

On access to Higher Education

Improve the availability, the quality and the relevance of statistical data used for the evaluation and the piloting of higher education in Africa

Improve the training conditions and the offer of educational services

Diversify higher education services and courses to better answer an increasing and varied demand and improve the relevance of the training courses.

Adopt, sign and ratify, and then implement the new revised Arusha Convention, in order to stimulate an academic mobility, transcending the regional and linguistic areas within the Continent.

Increase and broaden equitable student access, with the appropriate financial support to students from poor and marginalized communities and targeting a greater representation of women across broad fields of study.

Provide a diverse range of higher education institutions such as research-intensive universities, undergraduate universities, polytechnics, teacher-training colleges, rural institutions

Encourage private sector participation in the provision of private institutions while assuring quality of such provisions driven by the Rights based approach

Encourage the delivery of higher education through Open and Distance Learning and Virtual Universities with appropriate quality assurance mechanisms in place

On Quality Assurance

Adopt a stepwise development strategy. Further work on the link between QA and labor market needs is recommended

The responsibility for quality of higher education ultimately rests with the HEIs. Even in the absence of external accreditation, institutional academic reviews (academic audits) are an effective way to introduce a culture of quality into an institution

The need for technical assistance to develop quality standards is urgent, particularly as regards regulation of e-learning and cross border delivery of tertiary education. Partnership with foreign institutions and QA agencies can be a solution

Governments and national agencies are advised to consider reviewing tertiary education funding policies such that allocation of public resources to tertiary institutions is linked to quality factors as a strategy for encouraging institutions to undertake quality improvements

Regional collaboration in quality assurance is particularly relevant to Africa Development of "Africa Higher Education Quality Mark" is desirable

Facilitating dialogue and providing technical assistance towards creating an African higher education space

Establish sub-regional and regional networks for quality assurance to promote cooperation among African experts and common frame of reference for standards setting and monitoring.

Strengthen institutional and human capacity for quality assurance at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

Strengthen the external examiner system and encourage regional and sub-regional peer reviews

Establish appropriate quality assurance regulatory mechanisms for cross-border provision of higher education

On Harmonization

Establishment and maintenance of continental political commitment to the process of harmonization: Endorsement of the AU HEP Harmonization Strategy by COMEDAF was an important statement of political commitment; Revision and Expanded Ratification of the Arusha Convention; Creation and Promotion of Forums for Networking.

Cooperation in information exchange: Establishment and maintenance of a central database of African higher education institutions and programmes; Establishment of an African system to measure performance of higher education institutions;

Development and maintenance of a continental framework for higher education qualifications: Establishment and maintenance, through Regional Economic Communities (RECs), of regional higher education harmonization processes

Creation of minimum standards in targeted qualifications such as joint curriculum development and student mobility schemes

On Working Conditions for Staff in African Institutions of Tertiary Education

New thrust in strategic planning : new strategic plans should be comprehensive and indicative of where these institutions want to go over the next ten years, what activities they intend to undertake, with how many members of staff and with what resources. They should be developed as marketing tools and once completed presented to the governments, private sector and donors

Strengthen management and leadership capacity focusing on new public management

Rethink the role of tertiary education in capacity building for the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and new development visions and give it a proper place in the national and regional development strategy

Review the funding frameworks for tertiary education and link funding levels to inputs and outputs

Adopt a human resources management approach in which labour is considered the most valued asset to be nurtured, motivated, and supported to enhance organizational competitiveness. Review workloads and carry out staff audits in order to ensure equal work for equal pay. Use scientific norms for valorizing academic work and use these norms for time accounting by staff and staff appraisal for staff development and reward management.

Support governments to strengthen capacity and Help them to assess their funding frameworks and gather knowledge on alternative ways of funding tertiary education.

Adopt the ILO-UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, 1997

On Sciences, Technologies, Research and Innovation

Establish a Coalition around the Science and Technology for the Development of Africa, by elaborating a strategic plan of development of the science and technology and a strategic plan of development of the human resources in adequacy with the potentialities and the development opportunities

Promote the creation of scientific academies and accelerate the creation of faculties or institutes specialized in teacher training, develop technological and professional institutions offering short term training courses and diplomas (on one, two or three years)

Rebalance workforce for the benefit of scientific and technological sectors in adequacy with the strategic plan of economic, social and cultural development and revisit curricula to strengthen the culture of the experiment, the creativity and the innovation. Support and value the insertion of the girls and the women in the scientific and technological professions

Train massively education and training staffs on Information and Communication Technologies for Education (ICT for ED), in order to develop and support the implementation of distance training offers and diplomas.

Encourage authorities to innovate in the allocation of opportunities and advantages to the teachers and the researchers in the scientific and technological sectors

The population pyramid is an asset for Africa if it mobilizes in a voluntarist way its resources to invest them largely in the education in particular in the scientific and technological trainings. Africa can then satisfy its needs in human resources and even export skills and experts, without prejudice.

Define a competitive system to finance the research and incite private enterprises to participate in the financing of the technological training and of the research

Strengthen institutional and human capacity for good quality research through appropriate funding, training and research collaboration with well-established researchers within and outside Africa

Promote R & D, and reward innovative research and development activities especially those that target development problems indigenous to Africa

Create incubators and scientific parks in Higher Education Institutions

Endow Higher Education establishments with adequate documentary resources of quality

On Relevance, efficiency and effectiveness

Higher education institutions should be supported to serve the priorities and needs of Africa's development through socio culturally relevant curriculum and curriculum delivery, particularly in the fields of Science and Technology, National development plans should match graduate output with national human resource needs in order to minimize graduate unemployment.

Technical and Vocational Education and Entrepreneurship should be part of higher education training to prepare graduates for the world of work.

African indigenous knowledge should be part of the higher education delivery processes and this knowledge should be disseminated widely.

Ensure that values of peace, conflict prevention and resolution as well as the right attitudes, behaviors and ethics are inculcated in students and staff.

Build credible information systems and statistical databases for evidence-based decision making and planning

Foster a culture of use of ICT and Open and Distance Learning for teaching, learning and management

Ensure that Higher Education foster democratic values, sustainable development as well as the Millennium Development Goals

The governance and management of Higher Education Institutions must be strengthened in ways that are conducive towards greater autonomy, transparency and accountability

On Partnerships and Cooperation

North-south cooperation should be based on strong structures and sustainable frameworks

South-south and north-south research driven cooperation should address relevant regional cross-border issues: such as water, energy, wildlife, history, ethnicity and culture, governance, trade, transport, conflict resolution, climate change and food security.

Cooperation and partnership should be mutually beneficial.

Cooperation should be structured in such a way that skilled people are encouraged not to migrate from Africa, while strengthening links with the African Diaspora to benefit Higher Education in the continent

On the Creation of an African Higher Education and Research Area

African countries should support the creation of an African Higher Education Area and Regional Centres of Excellence for the exchange of experiences and expertise; student and staff mobility at regional level; encourage joint degrees; and mutual recognition of certificates, diplomas and degrees.

Strengthen teaching and research in African languages to promote communication and regional integration.