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Role of Universities in Regional Training and Research

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The University

- Institution of higher education and research
- Grants academic degrees at all levels (Bachelors, Masters and Doctorates)
- Word university derived from Latin "*universitas*" meaning the whole or corporation



The University ctd...

- It is also a *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* - a community of masters and scholars (professors and students)
- Institution of higher learning with teaching and research facilities



Kinds of Universities

- Modern universities in some parts of the world are classified as:
 - (i) Teaching universities (liberal arts and sciences) – focus on teaching with little or no research
 - (ii) Research universities – focus on research combined with teaching, mainly at graduate level



Types of Universities

- In African context, difference between teaching and research is blurred
- Public (state owned) universities are supposed to be both teaching and research universities
- Private universities in Africa mainly teaching universities (mainly go for the soft options)



Functions of a University

- Initially universities were centres of intellectualism
- Knowledge was primarily pursued for its sake and its intellectual beauty, with little or no impact on society except for Theology and Law –later Medicine (no Engineering – those were Trades learnt through apprenticeship under Master)
- Universities produced the intellectual elite (intelligentsia) and to a lesser extent professional classes of society



Functions ctd...

- Modern universities moved away from the narrowly focused missions
- Provide training in wide variety of disciplines of interest to society
- By and large, produce graduates of value to society



Universities as Source and Repository of Brain Power and Knowledge

- Good universities are generators, repositories and high concentration of best brains and great minds
- Have capacity for innovation through research (basic, commissioned, applied and action)
- Have requisite infrastructure for high-level undergraduate and graduate training



African universities in regional training and research initiatives

- Many African universities already participating in several regional training and research programmes
- Initiatives are usually based on networks and consortia, involving several participating institutions
- Each institution acts as a node in the system



Examples

- Typical Network:

African Network of Scientific and Technological Institutions (ANSTI), headquartered at UNESCO Regional Office Nairobi



Examples ctd...

- Typical consortia:
 - The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is an initiative by a consortium of 12 universities in East and Southern Africa to develop and strengthen human resource capacity for inter-disciplinary problem-solving in the region. Its Secretariat is based at Makerere, Uganda
 - Institute for Capacity Development in Africa (ICAD) based at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology Nairobi, co funded by East African Governments and JICA. Owned by all public universities in East Africa



Examples ctd...

Now seen new Makerere University Programmes – the Regional Institute on Moi Avenue in Nairobi (new, I have no details)



Rationale for Regional-based Training and Research (+ve side)

- Pooling resources (specialized or scarce expertise and facilities) e.g. The NORAD funded Bandwagon Master of Architecture involving 7 universities in Southern and Eastern Africa (Students rotate through the 7 universities until all modules are completed for graduation complete)
- Common and cross-border problems with requiring regional approaches (e.g. ILRAD on Eastern African Livestock Diseases and ARPPIS at ICPE)
- Centres of Excellence, e.g. the ANSTI experience (one institution services one or more regions/institutions)
- Cross-fertilization



Rationale ctd..

- Fostering closer inter-institutional and inter-regional cooperation e.g. defunct University of East Africa
- Economies of scales and multiplier effect:
Programmes with regional dimensions, funding more than one institution is cost effective with bigger multiplier effect e.g. BIOERN and Lake Victoria Basin Environmental Research Programme funded by Sida/SAREC, coordinate by IUCEA and Sida/Relema. Several universities in East Africa involved



-ve side

- Regional Programmes tend to have narrow focus
- Need very good convener & coordination to succeed
- Can be heavy on overheads (budget overruns)
- Suffer from financial and sustainability problems (most regional programmes in Africa are donor-funded and donor-driven)
- Dependent on political and institutional goodwill



Role of Universities in Regional Training and Research –What African universities can contribute

By their very nature, universities have capacity to innovate and design curricula which address regional needs;

e.g. Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics at Makerere University and its sister institution in Dar es Salaam which train Statisticians, Demographers and Allied Professionals for English-speaking Africa. Initial funding and technical expertise provided by UNDP in 1960s. Francophone Africa has one in Cameroon?



Role of Universities....

- Many African universities possess wealth of experience in regional networking
- Well positioned to initiate and manage new regional training and research programmes
- Core business of universities is teaching and research
- In spite of low funding and poor conditions, many African universities have very high calibre staff (one has to look around) and the infrastructure



Role of Universities in Regional Training & Research ctd

- Given their wealth of experience, academic and professional expertise and competence, universities can:
 - Develop generic and customized regional training programmes (short and long term – Masters & PhD)
 - Deliver programmes in any mode outlined above
 - Identify regional research problems
 - Write grant winning research funding proposals



The AAU Experience

- AAU has been at fore-front of promoting regional networking in research and training.
- Recent example:
Study Programme on Higher Education Research Management in Africa
 - Research on Gender and Culture in African Universities Project (2004 – 2006) was contracted to African Gender Institute based at the University of Cape Town as lead university. Five other universities in Africa participated in the Project with AAU funding



AAU experience ctd...

- Project on Higher Education and African Development (2004 – 2006) contracted to UN Institute for Economic Development & Planning (UNIDEP) based in Dakar Senegal as lead agency. 8 African universities participated in the research and studies.



AAU Experience ctd...

- AAU has a virtual continent-wide institute, Higher Education Research Training Institute (HERTI) which trains younger higher education researchers in Social Sciences Research Methodology



End

Regional Training and research work
but many suffer from sustainability
problems when donor funding ends