

HIGHER EDUCATION NETWORKS RELEVANT TO AGRICULTURE IN AFRICA

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1. Introduction

“our entire continent remains at risk until the African university, in the context of a continental reawakening, regains its soul” Mbeki (2004)

The Role of Higher Education in Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation

There is growing recognition by Africans and by development agencies that they urgently need to address higher education issues if countries are to develop. There will be no development in Africa without effective leaders who are committed to adapt modern technologies to reality in Africa, to generate new, environmentally and small farmer-friendly technologies and to develop the social and political systems that can adapt to modernity without losing their essential values. The new generation of graduates must be able to work with farmers to produce sustainable solutions and implement changes. The role of effective leadership and capacity to address constraints and implement workable solutions is essential to the growth of African agriculture and to rural development.

Africa needs to assert the absolute pre-eminence of education, without high caliber development agents, leaders and people capable of analyzing and assessing information, demanding good governance and who are committed to uplifting society, there will be no progress. We need to *“adapt education to enhance critical thinking...the qualities that engender progress: imagination, dissent, creativity, professionalism and competence, a sense of responsibility and duty, love for a job well done”* Etounga-Manguella (2000).

We need to invest heavily in higher education if we are to create the surpluses needed to generate increased incomes and employment. Without the ability to increase output and profitability at the local level, it will be very difficult for Africa to achieve the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). We need to harness Africa’s creativity to serve development and use her abundant resources to improve the conditions of the poor.

“Africa’s second generation challenge calls for an institution-building initiative comparable to the human-capital-improvement initiatives that were launched in Malaysia, Brazil, Thailand, Indonesia, and India in the early 1960s and steadfastly implemented for two decades..... the severity of the situation requires a strategic national-regional-global effort to build a strong agricultural science and education base” (Eicher 2004).

2. Existing Networks Addressing Higher Education in Africa

(as at December 2005 – to be updated)

There are a wide range of networks addressing issues related to higher education, rural development, agriculture or natural resource management. Some of these networks are very active and others have lapsed or are only required to be active when faced with specific issues. The existing higher education networks in Africa are all highlighting the

need for change but only ANAFE, RUFORUM, FARA (new) and SAFE are active in promoting change directly relevant to agricultural and natural resource higher education at a regional or continental level. ANAFE promotes agro-forestry and an integrated approach to agriculture. It has been active in transforming higher agricultural education in West, East and Southern Africa. It is currently undergoing some transformation and the regional and national associations are becoming more independent. RUFORUM, formerly active in only five countries, is now independently owned by twelve universities in those countries and is open to membership by other agricultural faculties and universities and faculties throughout East and Southern Africa. It is primarily involved in providing research grants for graduate students working in teams that are interdisciplinary, participatory and that involve the university and government or other stakeholders. It is also actively promoting changed curricula, retooling of faculty and the development of doctoral programmes in member universities. SAFE is the other network of agricultural faculties which is of direct relevance as it is involved in promoting experiential learning and entrepreneurial activities for in-service degree training of agricultural extension agents. A FARA initiative (BASIC) aims to raise the quality and relevance of agricultural education through a partnership between selected African and Northern Universities and CGIAR centres. It will begin by building capacity in agricultural research for rural development emphasising an interdisciplinary approach.

The African Association of Universities (AAU) links vice-chancellors and presidents from most African universities and is at the forefront of the transformation of higher education. It is very active in researching the changes needed to higher education and provides a good contact point for initiatives aimed at changing higher education. It focuses its own efforts primarily on senior management and administrative changes and quality control at universities throughout Africa.

Inclusive continental and regional higher education networks

Association of African Universities (AAU) www.aau.org

This is the most important of the higher education networking institutions in Africa. The Association is made up of 113 universities from 31 countries as members of good standing and a further 66 universities from 27 countries who have allowed their membership to lapse. (See Appendix One for a full list of the associated universities). The members are represented by their Vice-Chancellors, Presidents or Rectors. The overall goals of the AAU are

- Strengthening capacity for knowledge generation and dissemination
- Enhancing the voice and recognition of African higher education institutions
- Strengthening leadership and management of higher education institutions

The AAU has an Executive Board with members from all regions and the President for 2005-2009 is Prof Ndebele from the University of Cape Town, South Africa and the Vice President is Prof. Amali from the University of Illorin, Nigeria. Contact details and the full membership of the board and of the Secretariat is provided in Appendix One.

The Core Programme from 2001-2004 was around the general theme “*African Universities and the Challenge of Knowledge Creation and application in the New Century*” Member universities had expressed their problems arising from the pressure for increased access to higher education and the challenge of being able to participate actively in the rise of the “knowledge” society and globalisation.

The Core Programme for 2005-2009 is “*Networking of African Higher Education Institutions for the Renewal of the African University*” The Eleventh Conference recognised the importance of networking within and between regions. The AAU has thus made a strong commitment to facilitating networks and are likely to be open to working together with any African network dedicated to retooling faculty and transforming our universities. Among other activities the AAU have also made a strong commitment to assisting universities to access broadband and develop better ICT skills and access. They are also involved in promoting communication through ROAP (a Roster of African Professionals) and DATAD (a Database of African Theses and Dissertations).

The AAU has been particularly involved in working on improving the management of universities and the results of its programme on Higher Education Management are reported in the AAU Research Paper series and in *Higher Education Policy* Vol.8(1), 1995 and Vol.36(1&2) 1998. They have also run a series of university leadership and management training workshops under SUMA (Senior University Management Workshops). The AAU has also collaborated on a number of gender equity programmes providing skills development to address the dearth of women in senior positions in higher education in Africa. They have held workshops on gender equity and training for leadership in Nigeria, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia supported by the Carnegie Foundation, ACU and UNESCO. A number of networks run under the auspices of the AAU including the ADEA Working Group on Higher Education and networks dedicated to specific topics such as WAUNET, the West Africa Universities conflict study network.

In his address to the General Conference of the Association of African Universities in February 2005, President Mbeki challenged the participants to find ways to improve collaboration among institutions of higher education, government and society...to revive the vibrancy of the African university....and to meet the development challenges and demands of the local, regional and African contexts (AAU press release, 2005). In his address Mbeki envisions a higher education system that emphasises African values and experiences and he has *“a vision that places education at the centre of our development programmes to ensure that we create a continent that is developed and prosperous”*. (Mbeki, 2005)

In her closing address Minister Naledi Pandor underlined the importance of a partnership of peers to enhance access to higher education and build capacity. She called on African governments to take responsibility for supporting such initiatives. (AAU, Press Release 2005).

“But the process of transformation is not static. It does not stand still. It does not wait for change to happen. Transformation has to reach into every nook and cranny of our higher education system and we find that the most difficult thing to change is institutional culture, that way of doing things, those invisible patterns of power and influence that determine that because a thing has been done like this since time immemorial it should continue to be done so, because it benefits a few, an entrenched few. And that is where we can learn from students and academics who bring fresh perspectives.” Pandor, 2005
N. Pandor

ADEA –WGHE Working Group on Higher Education www.ADEAnet.org

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa is primarily concerned with school level education issues but it also provides a platform for adult and higher education and for a number of cross-cutting issues like gender and sustainability.

The Working Group on Higher Education was created by ADEA to support the revitalization of African tertiary institutions. The WGHE aims to help tertiary institutions devise creative responses and promote consensus on revitalisation among governments and development partners. Participants include development agencies supporting higher education in Africa, national higher education oversight bodies, ministries of education, and a number of African tertiary institutions. The WGHE is led by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from these four groups, and is coordinated on a daily basis by the Association of African Universities.

WGHE Coordinator: Ms. Alice Sena LAMPTEY alamptey@aau.org

ANAFE - www.worldagroforestry.org The African Network for Agroforestry Education was launched in 1993, supported by Sida and based at ICRAF, Nairobi. Its goal is to promote and support a multidisciplinary approach in the teaching of agriculture and natural resources management, with a focus on agroforestry. The Network's specific objectives are to: (1) strengthen the content and delivery of tertiary education in agriculture, forestry and natural resource management with a special focus on the incorporation of agroforestry; and (2) facilitate linkages among education, research and extension to maintain the relevance of the educational programs. It has a network of 117 member institutions in 34 countries across Africa, including many universities and technical colleges. These are split into Southern Africa, East and Central Africa, African Humid Tropics and the Sahel. ANAFE is currently undergoing restructuring as it establishes a broader funding base. In the past it sponsored and initiated workshops, networks and publications to assist in curriculum reform, faculty retooling and institutional reform. Contact Prof. August Temu atemu@cgiar.org

BASIC Building African Scientific and Institutional Capacity is a FARA and ICRA initiative which will involve African and northern universities and CGIAR centres. The priorities and agenda are to be set by the African universities, the northern universities will provide assistance with pedagogics and the CGIAR centres will provide case materials. www.fara-africa.org

CAMES Conseil africain et malgache pour l'enseignement supérieur www.cames.bf.refer.org

Cames was established in 2000 as a co-ordinating agency for French-speaking higher education institutions in Africa. Funded by the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF), Unesco and others, Cames is aimed at disseminating research undertaken by French-speaking African universities, creating an online knowledge-sharing network, promoting student exchanges and harmonising the different higher education systems to facilitate the transfer of credits between countries. Member countries include Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, and Togo.

CHET Centre for Higher Education Transformation www.chet.org.za

CHET is primarily South African based although it has an international board and has a mandate to operate more widely. It is essentially a network organisation established to enhance higher education transformation by tapping available expertise. It has an interesting set of publications on higher education. Contact: Nico Cloete, Director who

has administrative and planning experience in higher education and is a psychologist by training. NCloete@chet.org.za

CHET also has a number of networks associated with it including the **African Student Leadership Network (ASLN)** with members currently primarily based in South Africa and Kenya but with plans to expand the network. There appear to be very few student networks. AIESEC is an international student network that could help to promote African student networks.

FORUM / RUFORUM (Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture) <http://www.ruforum.org>

The Forum on Agricultural Resource Husbandry was established by Rockefeller Foundation in 1992 to strengthen participatory research by graduate students and to strengthen agricultural higher education at universities in Uganda, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Malawi and Mocambique. In January 2004 it became an independent institution, RUFORUM (Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture) currently owned by ten universities but now open to membership from throughout East and Southern Africa. RUFORUM is specifically directed at promoting links with communities and relevant, participatory and inter-disciplinary rural development research and education. It has promoted changing curricula and discussions on the need to change agricultural university education. The main focus of its activities was originally to provide research funds to teams working on smallholder maize and bananas. Its mandate has now widened to all commodities and the programme particularly encourages participatory research teams that link the university and other institutions in supervising graduates working in rural areas to obtain their masters degrees. Its other objective is to assist in retaining high calibre researchers and lecturers by providing them with the funds, opportunities and incentives to work in the rural areas on inter-disciplinary teams. It has made a significant contribution to graduate training and in promoting closer links between universities, other research and government agencies and rural communities.

Contact: Dr. Adiplala Ekwamu eadipala@agric.mak.ac.ug

GRETAF www.gretaf.org Groupe d'Etude sur l'Education en Afrique. Gretaf is a non-governmental organisation designed to promote wider access to higher education in Francophone African countries in collaboration with local development agencies and international organisations. Gretaf is active in nineteen French-speaking African countries.

HEQMISA www.aau.org/heqmisa Higher Education Quality Management Initiative for Southern Africa was formed under the auspices of the AAU in order to both improve the quality of higher education by establishing standards and to make it possible for the transfer of students between universities. Chair of HEQMISA Task Force Prof T Ngwira, Bunda College, Malawi tnmngwira@globemw.net

IUCEA Inter University Council of East Africa – www.iucea.org/

is a regional inter-governmental organisation whose mission is to encourage and develop mutually beneficial collaboration between universities in East Africa, and between them and governments and other organisations, both public and private. It is active in promoting student exchange, curriculum harmonisation and co-ordinating regional research.

SAFE www.saa-tokyo.org Sassakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education promoting experiential learning degrees with student enterprise projects to be established in rural areas as a significant component of the degree. The University of Cape Coast inaugurated the project which is now working in a network with other East and West African countries to promote curriculum change. Contacts: Dr. Moses Zinnah (zinnahwi@ghana.com)

SARUA www.sauvca.org.za/sarua Southern African Regional Universities Association launched February 2005 in Cape Town. Committed to advancing the development agenda of higher education in Africa

The Partnership for Higher Education in Africa

www.foundation-partnership.org/afres.php Carnegie Corporation, Ford Foundation, Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation launched the Partnership in 2000. The Partnership formally recognises a commitment by the institutions to support Higher Education in Africa. Most grants are independently given but some are jointly sponsored.

Tertiary Education in Africa (TEIA) www.worldbank.org/af/teia An information resource for Bank staff members, development partners, scholars and graduate students. It contains references for the Bank's work on tertiary education in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as general information and statistics on this topic.

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