

# **REVITALISING HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA**

## **A Synthesis Report**

**Presentation to  
The Second African Union Meeting of Experts on  
the Revitalisation of Higher Education in Africa**

*Accra, Ghana  
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# INTRODUCTION

# Drivers of HE Revitalisation?

- **New** vision of the African Union
- Heightened role of knowledge & innovation in world economy
- Link between quality of human resources and development/poverty
- New appreciation of the role of HE in attaining MDGs

# Relative Neglect of HE

- Supposed low return on investment in HE - now largely discredited
  - 1990 EFA initiative focused on basic education
  - HE further marginalized by AU's "First Decade of Education for Africa" (1997-2006) + NEPAD

# What Is Higher Education?

- All post-secondary education
  - Universities
  - Polytechnics & Technical colleges
  - Teacher training institutions
  - Institutes for medical training, agric, etc
  - Distance education centres
  - Research centres and institutes
  - Others?

# Revitalisation?

- Institutional & system-wide reforms
  - HE policies
  - Institutional missions and strategies
  - Curricula and programs
  - Refocus on research & graduate study
  - Governance & management change
  - Institutional capacity development
  - ??
- Back to the **past**? Or back to the **future**?

# ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

# Resources Crunch

- Historic dependence on public subvention & donor support
- Reduced investment in education
  - Economic decline
  - Changes in donor positions
  - Policy change under SAPs: privatisation of services, 'cost sharing'

# Resources Crunch

- Decline in public spending on HE: 3.8% of GNP in 1970; 3.4% in 1995 - even as enrolment exploded!
- Reduced resources vs. new and expanded demands on HE institutions
- HE spending skewed towards recurrent costs - little for infrastructure, research, staff development & motivation

# Globalisation and Knowledge Economy

- Challenge of new modes: ICT, short courses, distance, private
- Cross-border provision - requiring new policies and standards
- Brain drain -heightened by increased international mobility of high-end labour

# Access and Equity

- Exponential increases in enrolments post-Independence
- Low HE enrolment ratios
- Stagnation in postgraduate studies
- New forms of social exclusion resulting from constricted HE access:
  - Parental status/wealth; geographic location; gender; minority status

# Quality and Relevance (1)

- Quality is multidimensional
  - Programs and policies
  - Staff numbers, qualifications and working conditions
  - Teaching and learning methods & materials
  - Equipment and facilities
  - Quality assurance systems

# Quality and Relevance (1)

- Status of research
- Staff quality and motivation: “Ageing professoriate”
- “Centres of excellence”: opportunities for quality enhancement, or diversion of scarce resources?

# Quality and Relevance (2)

- Relevance
  - To condition and needs of local society - contribution to development, innovation, democracy, peace and social cohesion, etc
  - To development of other education levels
  - To the market - diversity in student needs, employment opportunities
  - To national competitiveness in global society

# System Differentiation

- Opening up to private provision
  - Expansion in non-university HE
  - Open and distance education
  - Cross-border provision
- New challenges and opportunities

# Financing

- Retreat of state from full funding of HE
  - Reduced provisioning for modern facilities
  - Implications for access, quality and student welfare
- New challenges and opportunities

# Financing

- Innovations in public institutions
  - Variety of cost sharing approaches
  - Admission of privately sponsored students
  - 'Parallel' programs
  - Commercialisation of services
  - Purely demand-driven courses

# Governance

- From state control to state supervision?
  - Institutional development/strategic planning
  - Results-based management
  - Formal and informal systems of authority and accountability

# Other Issues

- HIV/AIDS
  - Impact on HE institutions
  - Contribution of HE to prevention and management
- Progress towards addressing this issue: pioneering role of AAU & ADEA/WGHE

# Other Issues

- Brain drain
  - How convert to “brain gain”?
  - Need for strategies for retention
- ICT
  - Issues of bandwidth and connectivity
  - Infrastructure and appropriate regulatory regimes
  - Use for research and education
  - Key mandate of AAU

# Revitalisation Initiatives

- Institutional, system, regional, pan-African
  - Curriculum reforms
  - Development of strategic plans
  - Increased inter-institutional collaboration
  - Regional networks

# Way Forward

## Role of AU

- Promotion & harmonisation of positive continental & regional policies/initiatives
- Promotion of HE as field of study & research
- Information and experience sharing - *African Observatory of Higher Education?*
- Advocacy & resource mobilisation for HE

# Role of AU

- AU “Strategic Plan 2004-2007”: revitalise HE by building on existing initiatives and empowering & working with existing structures – **why invent the wheel?**
- AU Ministerial “Plan of Action for Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015)” - HE as key area of focus: need to flesh out and provide direction

# Role of AU

- Accra Experts Meeting: one in series of activities
- Contribution: Identification of
  - Focal areas
  - Pivotal issues
  - Intervention modes
  - Expected outcomes & indicators
  - Agency – by whom? At what level?

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# Group Work Grid

<b>Focal Areas</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Interventions</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>	<b>Role players</b>