Leadership and Management: Case Studies in Training in Higher Education in Africa

Wildschut, Lauren, Mouton, Johann

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Introduction: Origins of the project

Claudia Frittelli

Identifying the need

Vartan Gregorian, President of Carnegie Corporation of New York said in his “New Directions” Report to the Board:

... If African universities are to help serve the goals of national, political and economic development, they must be able to develop, or have access to, the best available knowledge and information, and they must have the intellectual capacity to transform that information and knowledge into policy-related ideas and communicate them to leaders ... Any approach taken, however, must be in the context of an overall plan by a university to ensure sound institutional management, transparent and accountable governance, a thriving intellectual environment, adequate facilities for faculty members and students, and above all effective leadership.

Universities in sub-Saharan Africa have grown from fewer than 20 institutions in 1960 to approximately 650 in 2013, with an enrolment of 5.2 million students in 2010 and the highest rates of growth between 2000 and 2010 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). Much of this growth was due to private institutions or fee-paying student schemes at public universities. A new generation of African university leaders is confronted with an external environment increasingly focused on knowledge production, global competitiveness and local relevance; unprecedented expansion of the student body; increased privatisation; new forms of technological educational delivery, knowledge access and administrative systems; a relative decline in government spending along with new approaches to resource mobilisation; expanding international partnership and donor activity; and increased autonomy from government. Simultaneously, African universities are often blamed for a mismatch between high rates of graduate unemployment and the demand for technical skills required for emerging economies. Few countries have yet to adequately address this through strategically differentiated tertiary-education systems. In this environment, the sector requires higher education leaders who have knowledge of global approaches to transformation, who are accountable to their institutions’ missions, capable of formulating and influencing policy, and proficient at building institutions that can manage the often-competing demands of excellence, expansion and relevance. During the course of its 2000–2010 investment in institutional strengthening of African universities, Carnegie Corporation’s Higher Education and Libraries in Africa (HELA) programme identified a need to support the leadership development of emerging leaders at expanding and newly forming universities.

Trends in leadership and governance on the continent

Strengthening university leadership in Africa is critical at a time when the continent’s own political leadership and governance is in transition. The Africa Economic Outlook 2014, a report by the African Development Bank (AfDB), OECD Development Centre and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) states that:

Africa’s political governance has improved since 2000. Elections have increasingly become peaceful, and the participation of women in political life has increased ... There is a greater determination to fight corruption and illicit outflows of much needed cash – even though both still thrive. However, there are still many challenges ahead. Public protests have increased in recent years, largely in countries undergoing democratic transition. People want jobs and better wages, and they are
Introduction: Origins of the project

keeping a closer eye on their leaders, including through digital media. Violence by non-government actors decreased in 2012 but still remains high compared to levels recorded between 1996 and 2010. Recent surveys indicate that more than a dozen African countries are among 65 globally at an elevated risk of social unrest.

While these changes are promising and fragile, it takes institutions, public attitudes, and other systems to establish democratic governance. These changes point to a need for an academic class of young men and women who ensure democratic achievements are not ephemeral. Universities respond to political systems and reflect their governing systems, but also influence and provide democratic models for states. According to data from surveys of randomly chosen, representative samples of national legislators in 11 sub-Saharan African countries carried out by the African Legislatures Project between 2008 and 2010, 58% of members of parliament (MPs) interviewed had completed some form of tertiary education. Higher education is recognised as essential for the design and operation of modern democratic political systems, for staffing the legislature, judiciary and executive branches of government, as well as regulatory agencies, courts and police, political parties and key civil society organisations. The potential of a university to act as a training ground for democratic citizenship is best realised by supporting students’ exercise of democratic leadership on campus, which consequently is a key opportunity for the development of a national democratic culture.

Trends in university governance worldwide

The transition in university organisational and governance structures over the last decades worldwide has been described by Bleiklie and Kogan (2007), as a shift in two broad sets of ideas about university governance: 1) A republic of scholars in which institutional autonomy and academic freedom are closely related – leadership and decision making are based on collegial decisions made by independent scholars, and 2) the university as a stakeholder organisation where “institutional autonomy is considered a basis for strategic decision making by leaders who see their primary task as satisfying the interests of major stakeholders” – the academic voice is one among multiple stakeholders. Senior leadership has evolved from traditional teams comprised of vice-chancellors, bursars, registrars and librarians to professional management teams including deputy vice-chancellors of academics, research, finance, resource mobilisation, partnerships, teaching and learning, internationalisation, transformation and equity, to name a few. External factors including global rankings, regional accountability mechanisms, donor agendas, new frameworks from regulatory bodies, and networks and partnerships have also impacted African higher education reform. According to the African Union Outlook on Education Report 2014, the continent’s higher education crisis extends beyond financing and expansion challenges. The sector has failed to deliver on the African Union’s vision because it is fundamentally oriented towards teaching, with little focus on research. Research could play a pivotal role in the production of knowledge and creation of innovation to support Africa’s improving position in the global economy. According to Nico Cloete, Director of the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET), South Africa, higher education leadership training should take cognizance of emerging differentiation in higher education. Skills required for leading national flagship universities which were aimed at nation building and development after the period of independence required managing access, resources and political conflict. Those same leadership skills are not adequate for today’s current focus on knowledge production. Emerging research universities require leaders to be accountable for inputs, outputs, and indicators of performance, for example. For private universities, the fastest growing sector, the focus will be on attracting students, quality, relevance and profitability. The leadership demands are different from those of predominantly publicly funded undergraduate universities.

2  Ibid.
Rationale and selection of grantees: Higher education national councils

Over the course of the Corporation’s USD 100 million investment in institutional strengthening at eight public universities in Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana between 2000 and 2010, numerous project leaders were promoted to senior leadership. While some vice-chancellors had participated in leadership development programmes in the US and Europe, most expressed dissatisfaction with the use of irrelevant case studies, uncomparable resource environments and governance structures, as well as little opportunity to build networks with colleagues in Africa. In consultation with African university stakeholders, the vision of HELA’s leadership training initiative was to develop national systematic programmes that would establish networks of university leaders who were trained in various approaches to leadership, policy and reform issues; responsive, transparent, and committed to their institutions’ goals and countries; familiar with leadership literature and approaches; and sensitive to options for attaining organisational goals.

An additional aim of the programme was to support research and policy dialogue on leadership and governance transitions occurring at African universities. Institutional data and research on leadership in higher education in Africa was scarce. The Council on Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) received funding to address this gap by developing a Higher Education and Leadership Programme (HELP), which conducted research through national and transnational comparative research groups. The CHET Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa (HERANA) provided institutional data, performance indicators, and conceptual models which served as a platform for senior leaders to assess the actual state and positioning of their universities.

National higher education councils and commissions were the only organisations other than ministries that had a comprehensive reach to the sector. Coordinated by national councils, leadership programmes could cost-effectively train large numbers of senior academics and address national policy challenges within the context of their countries. The Tanzania Commission of Universities (TCU) under the leadership of Executive Secretary Mayunga Nkunya proposed a national programme for its constituents, vetted by Vice-Chancellors Tanzania. In Uganda the National Council for Higher Education Management and Leadership Programme (MLP) aimed to develop 150 competent senior leaders. The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) in Ghana followed with their Senior Academic Leadership Training (SALT) programme, which targeted teams of leaders at select institutions. In addition to sharing resources across councils, these programmes provided a platform for senior leaders to address national higher education policy issues with government-appointed officials, and for private universities to converge with older, established ones. This led to the establishment of national higher education forums in Tanzania, accreditation systems for the private sector in Ghana, and shared practices across private and public institutions in Uganda, for example. The councils’ emerging role in higher education became a topic of research itself, resulting in a book entitled, Higher Education Councils and Commissions in Africa, a comparative study, by CHET HERANA. The Corporation provided subsequent grant funding to TrustAfrica, a pan-African policy organisation to coordinate higher education multi-sectoral dialogues in Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria and Ghana which resulted in national discussion of many of the issues raised during the leadership training. The national demand for policy dialogue among government, academic and private sector stakeholders culminated in the planning of an African higher education continental summit entitled, “Revitalising Higher Education for Africa’s Future” which took place in Dakar, Senegal 10–12 March 2015.

In brief, the challenges at the outset were multiple: the national councils were overstretched by the demands of regulation and accreditation. Some recruited new staff. Technical assistance was required to establish a framework for training that was locally relevant, transformative and responsive to “needs assessments”. Re-orientation was needed to develop a pool of African trainers who facilitated interaction and leveraged participants’ own knowledge rather than lectured. Generating modules that drew on African university case studies, frameworks and strategies necessitated pioneering work. Lastly, strategic recruitment needed to be weighed against the political sensitivities of public and private institutions. The Evaluation Research Agency (ERA) was commissioned to monitor and evaluate the programme, but their role expanded to become one of
technical capacity-building to address the numerous challenges. Leadership training in some cases was reduced to basic management training due to a lack of orientation around strategic, human resource and financial management among rotating heads and deans. They are often appointed with minimal experience at a time when the sector is expanding rapidly. Participants reported benefiting from opportunities to reflect on and incorporate democratic and participatory styles of leadership, delegation, interpersonal skills, and supervision on return to their institutions. Largely representative of undergraduate teaching institutions, they also had to be made aware of the priority and incentives for research in their academic systems. The crucial role that research will increasingly play in Africa’s development and future requires a new set of leadership skills to enable a critical mass of leading African universities to become excellent research universities. The effectiveness of systematic training programmes over alternative approaches to leadership development are a topic of ongoing discussion. Grantee reflections, learnings, and outcomes on developing these programmes and what they reveal about the state of higher education leadership and management in Africa are the subject of subsequent chapters of this book.

### CARNEGIE CORPORATION GRANTMAKING IN AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP POLICY AND RESEARCH (2007–2015)

#### LEADERSHIP TRAINING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of organisation</th>
<th>Programme name</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Amount invested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE)</td>
<td>Senior Academic Leadership Training (SALT)</td>
<td>2010–Present</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>USD 1,390,000</td>
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<td>National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)</td>
<td>Management and Leadership Training Project (MLP)</td>
<td>2009–2013</td>
<td>150 cascaded to 481</td>
<td>USD 611,000</td>
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#### POLICY AND RESEARCH

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Name of Organisation</th>
<th>Programme name</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount invested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA)</td>
<td>Higher Education Leadership Programme (HELP)</td>
<td>2011–Present</td>
<td>Comparative Research Networks and National Working Groups on Leadership and Governance research</td>
<td>USD 1,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Higher Education Transformation Trust (CHET)</td>
<td>Higher Education Research and Advocacy Expertise Network in Africa (HERANA)</td>
<td>2007–Present</td>
<td>Three phases of higher education research in collaboration with flagship universities in eight African countries</td>
<td>USD 2,352,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TrustAfrica</td>
<td>National Higher Education Dialogues and Continental Summit</td>
<td>2010–Present</td>
<td>Multi-sectoral policy dialogues in Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana and Nigeria culminating in a March 2015 continental summit</td>
<td>USD 2,022,600</td>
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USD 5,575,000

**TOTAL** USD 8,922,700