CHAPTER 1
A REVIEW OF THE SCHOLARSHIP ON HELM TRAINING IN AFRICA

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1.1 Introduction

Higher education is generally accepted as key to social, political and economic development.\(^1\) The establishment of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Africa in the 1960s (when most African countries attained their political independence) was motivated by the desire to develop the specific skills that African countries needed. Since their establishment in the 1960s, HEIs in Africa have grown and played an important role in building knowledgeable and skilled human capital necessary for development.

However, HEIs are beset by numerous challenges. Some of these challenges include: inadequate funding and an inability to diversify funding, poor infrastructure and facilities such as laboratories and libraries, increasing demand for access, poor governance, poor leadership and management, inadequate and unqualified staffing exacerbated by brain-drain and the impact of HIV and AIDS, deteriorating quality and relevance of teaching and research which cannot match the demands of the labour market.\(^1\)\(^2\)\(^3\)\(^4\)\(^5\)\(^6\)\(^7\)\(^8\)

It is said that no institution or organisation can rise above its leadership. Leadership in HEIs, as in any other organisation, plays a crucial role in the development and progress of those institutions. However, many higher education leaders and managers in Africa lack the skills to effectively deal with the enormous challenges HE in Africa faces in the 21st century.

There are few studies that attempt to document the challenges that African higher education leaders and managers face. A study conducted by the Association of African Universities (AAU) in 2013, based on data obtained primarily from university leaders, vice-chancellors, rectors, presidents and senior management staff of 33 African HEIs, found that a majority of leaders and managers lacked skills and that 90% had never attended any leadership training. The study also identified a number of challenges that leaders/managers of HEIs in Africa face. These challenges include: lack of vision for leadership development, lack of qualified staff in leadership/management positions, lack of succession plans, lack of resources (financial and infrastructure), and a lack of structural and systematic training development programmes. Among its recommendations, the study highlighted three:

- The need for building institutional leadership capacities in the region
- The need for equipping HE leaders with leadership and managerial skills

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6 Aina, 2010.
• That leadership/management capacity development be differentiated on the basis of managerial level, experience and gender.

While a huge amount of research has been done in the domains of policy and teaching and scholarship, some studies (e.g. by the Centre for Research on Science and Technology, at Stellenbosch University) show that little research has been conducted on leadership and management. This lack of sustained scholarship points to the need for more research on leadership and management of HE in Africa. This chapter presents a review of the scholarship on these topics in Africa since 2000. The review elucidates the following themes: university governance; academic freedom and university autonomy; financing; leadership behaviour and style; leadership and gender; strategic planning; quality assurance, social relevance and accreditation; and institutional transformation and reform. As background to a more detailed discussion of these themes, the chapter commences with a synopsis of the state of HE in Africa and highlights two major challenges facing HE in Africa, namely, increased demand for access and inadequate financial resources.

1.2 State of higher education in Africa

Higher education in Africa has a short history. Most universities in Africa were established in the 1960s (the period when most African countries attained their political independence). Since then, African countries have endeavoured to expand and develop the HE sector. For many years, HE in Africa has been dominated by public universities. However, with the introduction of structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s, which focused on measures to reduce the role of the state in development, the ascendency of market ideology, and the initiation of market-friendly reforms worldwide, the landscape began to change. Despite the fact that private higher education institutions still lag behind in terms of student enrolment, the private sector can be described as the fastest growing sector of HE in Africa. For instance, within sub-Saharan African (SSA) region there are 109 public universities, 526 publicly funded polytechnics or colleges and 456 private universities or colleges. Within this region, public universities account for 72% of the total student enrolment and private institutions account for the remaining 18%.9 10 Africa’s HE gross enrolment ratio has increased from 1% in 1965 to 7% in 2010.

Despite the fact that African HE has registered some progress in student enrolment and the number of public and private universities over the past 50 years, Africa’s higher education sector faces numerous challenges. Some of these challenges, as mentioned earlier, include inadequate funding for research, and an inability to diversify funding; poor governance, leadership and management; poor and inadequate infrastructure and facilities such as laboratories and libraries; deteriorating quality and relevance of teaching and research which cannot match with the demands of the labour market; inadequate and unqualified staffing exacerbated by the brain-drain and impact of HIV and AIDS; lack of academic freedom; erosion of universities’ autonomy; perpetual student unrest; and an inability to meet increasing demand for equitable access.11 12 13 14 15 16 17 Urgent action is needed to address these challenges if HE is to develop the human resources needed for economic growth in Africa.

11 Atteh, 1996.
15 World Bank, 2009
16 Yizengaw, 2008.
17 Pillay, 2010.
1.3 Access and participation

Over the past 50 years, HE student enrolments in African countries have increased significantly. The UNESCO’s Institute for Statistics (UIS) reports that over the last four decades the HE system has expanded at almost twice the global rate. Between 2000 and 2010 the total number of students pursuing HE increased from 2,344,000 to 5,228,000.\(^{18}\) Despite the increased enrolments, this has not matched the demand for tertiary education. Of all the regions of the world, SSA countries have the lowest tertiary gross-enrolment ratios (GER)\(^{19}\) of 7% while the world’s GER stands at 29% (UIS data, August 2014). Note that SSA gross enrolment in 1965 was just 1%.\(^{20}\) The UIS 2012 report indicates that within the Sub-Saharan Africa region only four countries have a tertiary gross enrolment of 10% and above – Ghana (12%), Mauritius (17%), South Africa (18%), and Nigeria (10%).

It is worthwhile noting that participation in HE in Africa favours men. In the SSA region, only 38% of enrolments are women. Although the participation in HE favours men in many African countries, there has been a substantial increase in women’s participation in some countries including Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi and Tanzania.\(^{21}\) Furthermore, while most men enrol in the disciplines of commerce, engineering, information communication and technology, and engineering, the majority of women study in the humanities and education.\(^{22}\) It is also pertinent to note that access and participation in HE is also related to socioeconomic status, and it is therefore not surprising that enrolment in most African universities is dominated by students from higher income households. Ironically, public spending on HE as a proportion of the education budget is generally high in most African countries. Financing HE in Africa poses a major challenge not only because funding from public coffers appears to be unsustainable, but also because of the growing demand for public funding of other competing sectors of the economy including primary and secondary education, health, agriculture and social welfare.

For many years, HE in Africa was dominated by public universities.\(^{23}\) However, the landscape has now reversed. Currently the private sector is a fast growing segment of HE in Africa, however, it still only accounts for a small share of higher education student enrolment because most of the private higher education institutions (PHEIs) are small.\(^{24}\)\(^{25}\) The number of tertiary education institutions now exceeds 650 – around 200 public and over 450 private.\(^{26}\)\(^{27}\) As stated in the previous section, the Southern African Regional Universities Association\(^{28}\) reports that there are 109 public universities, 526 publicly funded polytechnics or colleges, and 456 private universities or colleges within southern Africa\(^{29}\). Within the SADC, South Africa alone has 23 public universities accounting for 70% of the overall enrolments in the region. Within southern Africa, public universities account for 72% of the total student enrolment while private institutions account

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\(^{18}\) UIS education data from 2012.

\(^{19}\) According to The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the gross enrolment ratio (GER) is the ratio of total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education. The GER which is expressed as a percentage can exceed 100% because of early or late entry and/or grade repetition (see UNESCO’s Education for All Report 2008).

\(^{20}\) Bloom et al., 2006.

\(^{21}\) UIS education data from 2008.

\(^{22}\) Pillay, 2010.


\(^{25}\) World Bank, 2009.

\(^{26}\) Ibid.

\(^{27}\) Varghese, 2009.

\(^{28}\) SARUA (Southern African Regional Universities Association) was founded in 2005, and its membership constitutes all public universities of the 15 countries that make up the Southern African Development Community (SADC). SARUA aims to “strengthen the leadership and institutions of higher education in the Southern African region”. Currently, SARUA has 57 members (see http://www.sarua.org/).

\(^{29}\) SARUA, 2012.
for the remaining 18%. In terms of the distribution of PHEIs, Francophone countries account for 53% and Anglophone countries account for 34%. South Africa has the largest number of PHEIs (79), followed by Senegal (41) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (39). Some SSA countries do not have any PHEIs.

The rapid increase of enrolment in HE has compromised the quality of tertiary education in Africa. Universities do not have adequate facilities such as libraries and laboratories or sufficient teaching staff to facilitate teaching and research. Presently, there are 217,000 teaching staff in SSA compared to 10,983,000 for the entire world. This means that the student-staff ratio across SSA stands at 24.1 compared to a global ratio of 16.2.

1.4 Financing higher education in Africa

The financing of higher education in Africa has become one of the major issues of discussion among university managers and policy makers in recent years. Since the establishment of universities and colleges in Africa in the 1960s, most public universities have been hugely dependent on public resources. Other development agencies including the World Bank have taken the lead in funding the HE sector in Africa. Arguably, developments in HE in Africa have been heavily influenced by external forces. However, the economic crises of the 1970s and 1980s, which resulted in certain global structural reforms, affected the steady flow of both external and internally sourced funding to HE in Africa. By the late 1980s public spending on HE had become unsustainable, while student enrolments and the demand for HE remained high. As expected, the dwindling of financial resources to HEIs could not match the increased demand for access, infrastructure and other facilities and materials for teaching and research.

In 1988, the World Bank through its comprehensive analysis of educational development in sub-Saharan Africa titled *Education in sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for adjustment, revitalisation, and expansion*, recommended that African countries needed to develop educational policies that focused on adjustment, revitalisation and selective expansion within levels of education. Among other things, the report emphasised the need for national governments to diversify sources of funding for HE, as well as the need to effectively and efficiently use the available resources to improve HE. In responding to these structural adjustment reforms, many developing countries and donor agencies decided to reduce their expenditure on HE, and many countries and donor agencies shifted their focus from higher to primary education. The World Bank reports that public expenditure per tertiary student fell from USD 6,800 in 1980, to USD 1,200, and has recently averaged about USD 981 in 33 low-income SSA countries. In addition, the World Bank’s financial support to Africa’s higher education sector which had averaged USD 103 million annually between 1990 and 1994, dropped to USD 30.8 million per year between 1995 and 1999, after which it rose slightly to USD 36.6 million per year between 2000 and 2004 (see Figure 1.1).
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Figure 1.1 shows that funding for tertiary education rose between 2005 and 2008, averaging about USD 83.9 million, but still remained below the expenditure levels of the 1990s. Interestingly, between the period 1990 and 2004, the World Bank increased its expenditure on primary and tertiary education. Not surprisingly, the decline in World Bank’s funding for HE between 1990 and 2004 has led many actors in the education sector to label the World Bank as “an active opponent of tertiary education”.

The reduction of funding to Africa’s HE has not only affected low participation rates in HE but also the quality of teaching and research output. However, more funding directed towards primary and secondary education has also increased the number of students at primary and secondary education levels. As a consequence, there is now also greater demand for tertiary education.

Africa’s current expenditure on tertiary education as a percentage of GDP stands at 0.78%, which is far below that of OECD member countries. This figure is more than 1.5% of GDP in at least 17 countries, Canada (2.7%), South Korea (2.6%) and the United States (2.8%) (OECD, 2013), but public expenditure on HE as a proportion of the education budget varies from one country to another. For instance, in Kenya between the fiscal years 2002/2003 and 2005/2006 the allocation of funding for HE as a proportion of the education budget increased marginally (11.5% in 2002/2003, 13.8% in 2003/2004 and 16.4% in 2005/2006), but there was substantial decline in HE allocations in both volume and proportion during the 2006/2007 financial year. For these five years, higher education expenditure as a proportion of the total education budget averaged 13.74%. Analyses of data from other SSA countries show that governments’ recurrent expenditure on HE as a proportion of expenditure on education is declining.

Currently, governments in Africa face severe financial constraints to sustain funding of HE. Moreover, there is also pressure (political or otherwise) that is exerted on national budgets to fund other sectors including primary and secondary education, health, social welfare and agricultural subsidies.

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40 Pillay, 2010.
This means that new avenues through which HE can be funded should be explored. To address this problem, there have been calls for national governments to find other sources of funding for HE. There have been a number of policy options on how universities in Africa can fund their operations with minimal dependence on public funds. Two of these include the private financing of education as well as the establishment of cost-sharing programmes whereby students and parents carry a significant share of the cost of HE. Some African countries including Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Malawi have reduced public funding to HE and implemented policies whereby students can fund their studies through loan schemes, repayable after the students graduate, but other governments are yet to take these drastic measures. It appears there is now renewed interest by international donors and development agencies to revitalise HE in Africa mainly through focusing on ‘partnerships’ rather than ‘aid’.

1.5 Leadership and management challenges of HE in Africa

HE is critical to the social and economic development of Africa. In Africa this ideal is hindered by many challenges that institutions of HE face, including a lack of trained, professional leaders and managers. Good leadership is one of the greatest challenges African HEIs face in the 21st century. Leadership in the university system plays a crucial role in its development and progress. For many years the notion of ‘leadership and management’ of HEIs in Africa has been restricted to the activities of those in executive management, and in particular the office of the vice-chancellor. However, more recently there has been a shift from this notion to include principals, vice-principals, registrars, deans and deputy deans of faculties, and heads and deputy heads of departments. HE leaders and managers face many challenges: together with limited institutional autonomy, there is a dearth of leadership development skills to manage staff and the increasing student population. There are poor or no succession plans, underqualified staff in leadership/management positions, inadequate resources (financial and infrastructure) a lack of institutional gender policies and structural and systematic training development programmes. The subsequent sections present an analysis of the themes that various scholars on HE leadership and management in Africa have discussed in the literature, particularly between 2000 and 2013.

1.6 Governance of HEIs in Africa

The governance of higher institutions of education in Africa, as in other parts of the world, has attracted the attention of scholars and policy makers from across the continent. Sayed has noted that the discussions and debates on governance of HE in Africa revolve around issues relating to the purpose of HE, the tension between university autonomy and public accountability, the nature of academic freedom and how it ought to be exercised, and the balance between self-regulation and governmental intervention and control.

The governance of HEIs in Africa can be explained historically. African universities share a common history. Kwapong attempted to enumerate six common features that characterise the founding of universities in Africa. First, many African universities were founded after the 1960s – the period during which many African countries attained independence from colonial powers. Second, the main aim of HE in Africa at the time (1960s) was the training of skilled personnel to take over from the departing colonial administrators. Third, all African universities were initially state universities, funded by

41 Samoff & Carrol, 2004b.
46 Ibid.
public money. Fourth, the administration and curricula of African universities were patterned after universities in the “metropolitan” countries. Fifth, most of the universities were established on new campuses and coincided with the establishment of new towns. Thus, these new towns became known as “university towns”. Lastly, all universities were largely staffed by expatriates.

Saint defines “university governance” as

the mechanisms whereby an institution incorporates the participation of relevant interest groups in defining the scope and content of its work – including the capacity to mediate among these interests when they enter into conflict – and the means whereby it demonstrates accountability to those who support it through its mission mandate and the application of its resources in pursuit of these goals.

As is the case with other universities worldwide, the establishment and governance mechanisms of public universities in Africa is legally provided for by Acts of Parliament and other statutes. It means that public universities are legally owned and governed by the state. Specifically, public and private institutions fall under the national ministries of education, which has a bearing on how these universities are governed. In this regard, most national governments in Africa have developed clearly spelt-out legal frameworks (i.e. laws and statutes) that determine how their public universities ought to be governed. These legal frameworks determine governance arrangements for HE systems, and provide guidance on specific governance issues including autonomy, accountability, government control and stakeholder representation.

Typically, in many African countries, governmental involvement in university affairs is the norm. In many African countries, (and certainly most Anglophone countries) the head of state is also the university chancellor, and has the ultimate authority in appointing key university administrators, such as the vice-chancellor and members of the university council. This model inevitably creates tension between the government and universities, especially with regard to policy formulation and implementation. In other countries, the vice-chancellor is appointed by a minister of education with or without the endorsement of parliament or even the chancellor. The vice-chancellor is equivalent to an American university president. The vice-chancellor is the academic and administrative head of the institution and is answerable to a university council. The membership of the university council is also appointed by the head of state, and is usually drawn from government, the university, the private sector and in some countries, the student body. The responsibility of a university council is to formulate and implement institutional policy decisions. Thus, a university council is considered as the executive body of a university's governance system and an advisory body to the university chancellor. University academic affairs are managed by the university senate. Faculties and departments organise teaching. Faculties are headed by deans – who are elected and serve for a specified period – while departments are led by heads who are usually appointed. It is thus quite evident that there is more potential for political interference in the affairs of universities in Anglophone countries.

Unlike in Anglophone countries, a university in a Francophone country such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, is headed by the minister of education (or HE). The rector (who is accountable to the minister of education or HE) is responsible for the day-to-day financial and administrative matters of the university. Deans of faculties and heads of departments are generally elected and possess certain decentralised responsibilities including the admission of students. It is clear that the administrative model is strongly hierarchical. This means that universities in Francophone countries are also characterised by more centralised governance.

51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
In contrast, there is relatively more autonomy for universities in the Lusophone countries such as Mozambique. In these countries universities are largely autonomous public institutions. As in Anglophone countries, university councils are responsible for institutional policy making, however their membership is drawn entirely from within the university. In Lusophone countries the university is headed by a rector who possesses considerable authority and is mandated to appoint faculty deans and department heads.

Regardless of their structure, there is consensus that the governance, leadership and management challenges that universities face cut across the African continent. This is largely because the leadership and management styles and systems inherited from the colonialists have simply been adopted indiscriminately. Many African governments have had to reform and transform their governance systems in an attempt to promote what has been termed ‘cooperative governance’. In South Africa, for example, the major challenge facing governance of HE in the post-apartheid era has to do with underpinning the nature of the relationship between the government/state and HEIs. In view of this, the South African government through the Ministry of Education developed policies to map out the governance of HE in South Africa. Some of these policy documents include The National Commission for HE (NCHE) report (1996), the Green Paper (1996), the White Paper (1997), the Bill on Higher Education, and the Higher Education Act of 1997. Each of these policy texts addresses a particular higher education governance issue. Sayed (2000) noted that these policies were developed to promote “cooperative governance” within the higher education sector. However, Sayed argued that the although the concept of ‘cooperative governance’ has a seductive appeal, it masks a number of tensions and contradictions regarding the balance between control and regulation, the nature of decision making, the balance between consultation and co-decision-making, the relationship between the state and civil society, and the policy mechanisms to steer them.

Sayed sees HE governance in South Africa as an outcome of the politics of policy contestation.

1.7 Academic freedom and university autonomy

While HEIs in developed countries enjoy a fair amount of autonomy, this is not the case in Africa where many universities are controlled by their respective states. Some scholars argue that government control of the HE system can adversely affect the development of HEIs.

It is not possible to discuss the governance and management of HE without making reference to academic freedom and the autonomy of institutions. Academic freedom and autonomy are among the most important issues concerning the existence, mission and role of the university worldwide. These twin concepts are essential to universities in their endeavour to address the socioeconomic, political and cultural needs of their particular countries. As a matter of fact, academic freedom is tagged to the autonomy of universities. Arikewuyo and Ilusanya define university autonomy as “the freedom of an institution to run its own affairs without direction or influence from any level of government.” Saint aptly described what autonomy may mean in the context of HE system. He writes:

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54 Ibid: 488.
55 Ibid.
For a higher education institution, it means the freedom to determine its own goals and priorities; to select its own leaders; to employ and dismiss staff; to determine enrolment size and rate of growth; and to manage its own budget, including the reallocation of funds among budget items and right to retain for future use any savings generated.61

In the context of this definition, it means that government’s interference or otherwise in the affairs of universities can compromise the autonomy of the institutions. A few studies have been conducted to assess the levels of autonomy among African universities. A study conducted in 27 countries of the British Commonwealth by Richardson and Fielden62 found that universities in ten SSA Anglophone countries enjoyed greater autonomy than those in Commonwealth countries in the Mediterranean and Asia, although their autonomy scores were slightly below the Commonwealth mean. This finding suggested that SSA universities were not significantly less autonomous than other Commonwealth universities.

Arikewuyo and Ilusanya63 conducted a study in Nigeria aimed at examining the level of autonomy in one of Nigeria’s third-generation universities and found that government intervention was generally regarded as reasonable. Specifically the study found that government never exerted any influence on the appointment, discipline, tenure or dismissal of staff; entry standards and pass and failure rates of students; curriculum and teaching; research and publication; membership and control of senate academic boards and staff. However, the study found that from time to time government exerted its influence on the appointment and dismissal of vice-chancellors; pay and conditions of service of staff; admissions quotas for minority groups; the introduction of new teaching fields; closure and amalgamation of courses; and duration of academic years. Furthermore, the study found that government often exerted its influence on the control of governing councils and the quality control of academic standards, number of students to be admitted and the level of fees to be charged by the universities. Arikewuyo and Ilusanya64 observe that these findings support the view that the Nigerian university system allows the governing councils to have control over the appointment, discipline, tenure and dismissal of academic and non-academic staff, and they argue that this is patterned after that of its colonial masters, the United Kingdom, where universities have greater autonomy in recruitment of staff.65 As we have already noted, this is not the case in Francophone countries where the state virtually regulates all university staff policies.

Academic freedom can be defined as “the ability of academic staff to teach, conduct research, and publish without outside interference”.66 Academic freedom is an ideal that faces challenges not only in African countries but across the globe. While there is general agreement about what constitutes academic freedom, there is contestation about how this is exercised.

Arguably, a majority of African governments are intolerant of the exercise of academic freedom – teaching freely, undertaking research of one’s own interest, communicating findings openly, expressing dissenting opinions, and the free expression of ideas.

There are numerous recorded cases of African governments’ unwarranted interference in academic freedom. Teferra and Altbach67 cite cases in Kenya, Algeria and Ethiopia where serious violations of academic freedom have taken place. For instance, over 40 university professors and lecturers from Addis Ababa University were expelled during the mid-1990s. A more recent case of the violation of academic freedom occurred in Malawi in 2011 where a fierce battle for academic freedom raged on for over eight months because the lecturers wanted assurances for their academic freedom from the Government of Malawi. This eventually led to the closure of Chancellor College, a constituent college of the University of Malawi. The stand-off began when a Political Science lecturer was interrogated by the Inspector General of Police for discussing with students the developments that led to the

63 Arikewuyo & Ilusanya, 2010.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
67 Teferra & Altbach, 2004;
overthrow of dictatorships in Egypt and Tunisia, and drawing parallels between Malawi’s fuel crisis and the uprisings in these two countries including the Arab Spring. The dispute between the lecturers and the Government of Malawi saw four lecturers being fired for their leadership roles in the struggle. After eight months of fighting, the then President of Malawi, Bingu wa Mutharika, issued an order guaranteeing academic freedom and reinstating the lecturers who were fired illegally. The 2011 academic struggle in Malawi is reminiscent of cases of interference of academic freedom during the repressive one-party rule of Hastings Kamuzu Banda.68

1.8 Leadership behaviour and style in HEIs

African universities, like universities worldwide, are mandated to engage in three activities: teaching, research and community service.69 In order to achieve the tripartite mandate, leadership of African universities need a cordial working relationship with academic and non-academic staff members, students and other stakeholders.

Generally, in most universities in Africa the vice-chancellor is the principal academic and executive officer.70 This implies that vice-chancellors have an important responsibility as far as the transformation of African HEIs is concerned. However, the major challenge relates to the manner in which vice-chancellors are appointed, and not necessarily the calibre of people who are appointed to the position. In most African countries, as mentioned earlier, university vice-chancellors are appointed by the head of state. But some pertinent questions can be asked: Who should be the vice-chancellor? What is the ideal selection process? What role should the university governing council and the government play in the process of appointing the vice-chancellor?

The leadership behaviour of vice-chancellors and work behaviour of lecturers and non-academic staff play an important role in achieving the tripartite mandate of universities in Africa.71 In a study comprising 27 universities of South-West Nigeria to determine the relationship between the leadership behaviour of vice-chancellors (as perceived by lecturers) and work behaviour of lecturers (i.e. level of commitment, conformity, cooperation and participation in the university administration), Oke et al.72 found that there is a significant relationship between the vice-chancellors’ leadership behaviour and the lecturers’ levels of commitment, cooperation and participation in university activities. Positive leadership behaviours of vice-chancellors tended to encourage the lecturers to become highly committed to their work. Conversely, where vice-chancellors were perceived to exhibit uncaring leadership behaviour, the majority of lecturers were uncooperative with university authorities.

1.9 Leadership and gender

Women have been and continue to be under-represented in higher education worldwide,73 which is partly because more men than women participate in HE. University leadership in most African universities and colleges is dominated by men, and this is compounded by the fact that most universities do not have institutional gender policies that promote and support women in taking up leadership and management positions. A study conducted by the the African Association of Universities in 2013 drawing on university leaders, vice-chancellors/rectors/presidents and senior management staff of 33 universities in sub-Saharan Africa found that the number of women in leadership positions is very low and that 81% (27) of the institutions studied had no institutional gender policy.

71 Oke at al., 2010.
72 Ibid.
A qualitative study by Makobela\textsuperscript{74} to examine the experiences of Black women occupying senior administrative positions at some South African universities found that these women described themselves as “donkeys of the university”, lacking support from both male and female colleagues, and not being recognised or rewarded for their hard work. According to their experiences, the women faulted the institutional cultures which tend to marginalise women administrators and scholars. These findings highlight the need to create environments that are conducive to the appointment of female administrators and scholars.

Another qualitative study by White, Bagilhole and Riordan in 2012 – conducted in Australia, South Africa and the United Kingdom (UK) with 56 male and female managers to analyse career trajectories into university management, the skills required to operate effectively and the power of vice-chancellors (VCs) and their impact on the gendered shaping of university leadership – found that the typical career was modelled on male academic careers. The study revealed that in South Africa and the UK, the perception of the top university leader was that of a man. However, in Australia, where more women have been VCs, there was no such assumption, and VCs are extremely powerful and do influence the gender balance of senior management. The perception that South African leaders of higher institutions have about the position of VC is largely influenced by the dominance of male colleagues taking up these positions at many South African universities. Apparently, this is not unique to South Africa. Many Africans assume that the positions of vice-chancellor or pro-vice-chancellor are only for men. The continued trend of male colleagues assuming the position of VC is likely to affect the participation of female colleagues in university management/leadership.

These studies highlight the need for HEIs in Africa to develop policies deliberately aimed at promoting gender equality and equity so that women can take up executive positions. In addition, HEIs need to create institutional cultures that do not marginalise women administrators and scholars but rather support them. Thus, there is a need to demystify the belief that university top leadership/management is only for men, by training and equipping more female academics with leadership skills so that they can assume leadership positions in African institutions of HE.

\subsection{1.10 Strategic planning in HEIs}

Strategic planning is a fairly recent phenomenon in most African HEIs. It was not until the early 1990s that most of these institutions engaged in serious strategic planning efforts. The preparation of strategic plans was in response to calls by donors for SSA universities to do so.\textsuperscript{75} The development of strategic plans by SSA universities could also be viewed as an extension of the ‘structural adjustment’ reform policies which were adopted by African governments and negatively affected the manner in which HE in Africa was financed and managed. A university strategic plan is a document that articulates a university’s mission, vision, goals, principles and challenges. It also outlines the action needed to achieve the goals and how to address the challenges within a specified time frame (for example, the next five years).

By mid-1995, more than ten universities in sub-Saharan Africa had developed strategic plans.\textsuperscript{76} Some of these universities include Eduardo Mondlane, Dar es Salaam, the University of Ghana, University of Zambia and Fort Hare University. Other universities in the SSA region, including the University of Malawi, only developed their first strategic plans in the early 2000s. The University of Malawi has recently developed its second five-year strategic plan (i.e. 2012 to 2017).\textsuperscript{77}

Developing strategic plans for HEIs is not without its challenges. A project dubbed “Strategic Planning in African Universities” was commissioned by UNESCO to investigate experiences in the strategic planning of VCs and their senior colleagues from 59 members of the Association

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa. The study revealed three important findings: firstly, that the publicising and negotiation of the strategic plan are relatively more important than conventional planning theory allows – this may require the involvement of other stakeholders in the early stages of the planning, as well as organising a conference to publicise the strategic plan; secondly, that academic staff should participate in the planning process so that the strategic plan has an “academic” touch; and thirdly, leadership of a university (i.e. the vice-chancellor) is very central to strategic planning and should be fully committed and support those that have been charged with developing the plan. While some HEIs have managed to develop comprehensive strategic plans, VCs and other senior managers still need training on how to go about the process of developing strategic plans that are responsive to the challenges of HEIs within the context of Africa.

1.11 Managing quality

Universities have a special role to play in society and must see to it that they generate knowledge that is not only of a high quality but is also socially relevant. Assuring the quality of HE is the key to achieving policy goals that universities and colleges set for themselves, as well as maintaining the prestigious place that HEIs hold in society. Sawyerr echoes this when he writes:

Universities would not deserve to be called universities, nor would they justify the massive material and psychological investment they enjoy, if they were not above all, principal sources of new knowledge and ideas, of trained minds and workers, and major contributions to the knowledge base for policy and development.79

In a stricter sense, Sawyerr implies that HEIs that do not produce creative and critical thinkers are not fit to be called ‘universities’. In short, it is imperative that African universities should strive to produce high-quality and socially relevant graduates who will in turn contribute to the socio-cultural and economic development of Africa. The World Bank (2009) argues that in order to stimulate economic development and growth of the continent, universities in sub-Saharan Africa should prioritise educational quality over the expansion of student enrolments. It has to be acknowledged, however, that the participation rate at most HEIs is still low. This means that institutions of HE in Africa need to achieve a balance between improving the quality of education as well increasing student enrolments.

It is heartening to note that the number of African public and private HEIs has grown. As elsewhere, private HEIs are establishing themselves as an important development partner in the higher education sector in Africa. The number of private tertiary-education institutions in the SSA region now exceeds 45080. However, the mushrooming of private HEIs poses other challenges in many countries, including compromised standards, lack of transparency, and an appetite for profits at the expense of educational quality. While not all private universities and colleges exhibit these characteristics, many do. It is therefore necessary to harness the private higher education sector to promote public interest. Two of the measures that have been put in place to guard against compromising the standards and quality of HE are the introduction of quality assurance agencies and the establishment of national councils for HE.

The role of quality assurance agencies is to monitor the quality of education offered by universities. This includes reviewing examinations, courses and programmes offered by faculties and departments. HE councils have been established to regulate both public and private institutions of HE. They also accredit universities and colleges. According to the World Bank,81 so far one-third of African countries have established national quality assurance agencies. A study commissioned by SARUA in 2008 found that more than half of SADC countries have either established or are in the process of establishing a quality assurance framework. Furthermore, the study

78 Farrant & Afonso, 1997.
80 World Bank, 2009.
found that 76% of HEIs have quality assurance systems, but noted that much needs to be done to improve quality assurance practices. Some of the countries that have established national HE councils include Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and South Africa.

1.12 Institutional transformation and reform

The HE sector in Africa has witnessed major changes with regard to how leaders responded to reforms and change. Some of these reforms and transformations at HEIs include the merging of two or more institutions. Indeed, transformation and change within the context of leadership style at South African HEIs present a very interesting case study. Transformation and reform at South African HEIs were influenced by the transition to democracy in 1994, the promulgation of a post-apartheid legislative framework (namely the White Paper on Higher Education Transformation,82 and the Higher Education Act of 1997),83 and the merging of HEIs (from 36 universities and technikons84 to 26 universities) from the early 2000s.

Prior to 1994, governance and management of South African institutions of HE were characterised by highly centralised and autocratic management styles and practices. However, the governance and management of HEIs were transformed after the promulgation of the White Paper on Higher Education Transformation and the Higher Education Act in 1997. The new governance framework was a departure from an exclusive form of governance to cooperative governance. On the one hand, the White Paper encouraged all stakeholders to participate in decision making and the formulation of policies, and also to take responsibility in determining an institution’s transformation agenda. It was envisaged that in order for cooperative governance to work, there was a need to create structures and conditions that would enable any differences between stakeholders to be negotiated in participative and transparent ways. On the other hand, the Higher Education Act of 1997 stipulated that the main governance structures within a public university should be the Council, the Senate and the Institutional Forum. In other words, the new legislation and the White Paper have transformed the nature of leadership in South African HEIs. The mergers of South African HEIs presented new challenges for the governance and management of the ‘new’ universities.

Considering South Africa’s socio-political environment prior to 1994, many people thought that leaders at the merger institutions lacked transformational leadership traits as well as the ability to manage the change. According to Vinger and Cilliers,86 the concept “transformational leadership” – first coined by Downton in 1973 – “is defined relative to the leader’s effect on his/her followers, in which the latter feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect towards the former and the followers are motivated to do more than they were originally expected to do”. Transformation leadership skills become relevant particularly when two or more institutions are merged. In this arrangement, more often than not, employees of the acquired institution(s) begin to lose a sense of belonging, identity and purpose. This can also lead to anger, depression, anxiety, helplessness and resignations. Others have argued that some employees may develop mechanisms of survival in the merged institution. Transformational leadership is therefore needed to transcend the cultures of the institutions concerned. In the same study by Vinger and Cilliers87 to establish whether senior leaders at the merged South African universities exhibited this skill found that the majority of the 190 senior leaders from the seven institutions did exhibit transformational leadership fairly often and managed the change fairly successfully.


84 In the context of South African education system, prior to 2004, a technikon was an institution offering technical and vocational education at tertiary education level. Since 2004, all technikons have changed their status by merging with traditional universities or become universities of technologies, and now offer degree programmes including postgraduate studies.

85 Republic of South Africa 1997.


87 Ibid.
1.13 Employability of university graduates

Another challenge facing leaders and managers of HE in Africa has to do with the employability of their graduates. There is a general assumption that there is a causal relationship between a person’s university education and their success in obtaining work in the labour market. Evidently, graduate unemployment rates are high in many African countries and employers bemoan the lack of basic, technical and transferable skills among graduate employees. For instance, the unemployment rate for those with undergraduate degrees in Nigeria is as high as 23.1%. The unemployment rate for graduates across the 25–29 age bracket for Ghana and Kenya is 41.6% and 15.7%, respectively.

A study\textsuperscript{88} funded by the British Council (in partnership with Kenyatta University, Kenya; University of Education, Winneba, Ghana; University of the Free State, South Africa; and University of Ibadan, Nigeria, running from 2013 to 2016) being carried out in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa to understand graduate employability has found that employers express concern about the work readiness of graduates. In other words, employers are dissatisfied with the skills and qualities of graduates. Generally, employers note that there is ‘skills mismatch’ between their expectations and graduates’ display of skills in the work place. According to the study, while employers are generally satisfied with the disciplinary knowledge of the students, they perceive gaps in their IT skills, personal qualities and transferable skills.

Another study carried out in 2014 by the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) – a body that regulates HE in five East African countries and also provides a forum for discussion on a wide range of academic and other matters relating to HE – found that at least half of the graduates produced by East African countries are “half-baked” for the job market.\textsuperscript{89} The study’s findings indicate that Uganda has the highest rate of graduates (63%) who are perceived to lack job-market skills. Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya have 61%, 55%, 52% and 51% of graduates respectively who are perceived to be unfit for jobs.

The findings from these studies suggest that few graduates from HEIs in Africa acquire the skills needed for the job market. The challenge for HE leaders and managers is to make tertiary education relevant for the job market. It is also important that HE leaders and managers in Africa realise that the solution to graduate unemployment requires concerted efforts between diverse stakeholders including government and industry.

1.14 Conclusion

In conclusion, the HE sector in Africa has an important role to play in the socioeconomic and political development of the continent. However, HEIs in Africa are beset by many challenges. This chapter has given an overview of the scholarship on leadership and management of HE in Africa, and particularly the serious issues leaders and managers of HE in Africa face and how these challenges are being addressed. What is clear is that university top-level leadership and management positions (i.e. vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellor) in Africa are dominated by men, and that the majority of leaders and senior managers of HEIs in Africa lack the requisite training and expertise to enable them to operate effectively and address the serious issues facing institutions. Thus the need for institutional-leadership capacity-training programmes cannot be overemphasised. HE in Africa has a great future, but this is to a large extent dependent on the quality of leadership and management of HEIs.
