CHAPTER 19

DESTINATION AND OUTCOME TRENDS FOR GRADUATES FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

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Introduction and context

Higher education institutions in Africa have come under scrutiny in the last decade regarding the quality of their programmes and the capacity to equip graduates with skills required in the labour market. The demands on higher education systems have become intense as the institutions have grown in numbers and enrolments and diversified their curricula. Repeated calls to institutions are that they should produce graduates who are work ready or who can contribute to income-generating activities which can then develop into medium and large size enterprises.

While such data are available in the developed countries, and more increasingly in the developing countries of Asia (the ASEAN region), there is a dearth of such data in Africa. Ironically Africa is the region most deserving of such data tracking, given the emerging diverse narratives about its higher education system. There, however, does seem to be excitement, as seen from published literature and policy discourses, associated with the positive press that higher education in Africa is receiving from development partners, especially the World Bank, whose policy position led to a long period of underfunding in the 1990s. More recent optimism has been created by the inclusion of higher education as part of the post-2015 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa, 2017). This change of attitude, it is argued, will spur more investments into the higher education system from national governments and international development partners, resulting in better accountability systems on the part of institutions, including better systems for collecting and reporting data on student learning outcomes.
Two contradictory narratives exist side-by-side regarding higher education, graduate employability and outcomes in Africa. The first narrative concerns the twin crisis of a shortage of jobs and a shortage of skills in most countries due to various dysfunctions within the higher education system, as well as structural economic factors. The second is that an increasing supply of graduates has not resolved the problem of unfilled jobs in the public and private sector (see for example, Republic of Kenya, 2013). These assertions are however compounded by another reality; they are not based on any empirical data. This deficiency makes it difficult to even begin to identify which skills are better enablers of graduate employability, institutional practices that are most promising in training employable graduates, what graduates do after graduation and the academic programmes that offer faster transition to labour markets.

Graduate unemployment is however not experienced with the same intensity throughout sub-Saharan African countries. There are regional, national and institutional level differences which, if explored, would lead to a construction of what contribution higher education in Africa is making to stem or accentuate trends in graduate employability. An attempt by the African Union Commission (AUC) to centralise the collection and management of data, including crucial higher education-related statistics as part of its higher education strategy, has not worked. But there are regional and national level efforts that have produced data that if synthesized can enable initial comparisons on how higher education throughout the continent is functioning.

This chapter reflects on trends in graduate outcomes and destinations in a number of sub-Saharan African countries. Data and information for the chapter have been derived from a systematic review of existing literature, mostly of a historical nature. The overall objective is to contribute to a comparable understanding of the connections between higher education and postgraduation student trajectories in Africa and deepen understanding of the working of higher education institutions and graduate labour markets. Globally, the marketisation of higher education has witnessed various aspects of the system subjected to metrics intended to measure the level of value derived from outputs to the system and the fit of outcomes to various economic imperatives.

**Conceptual and methodological note**

This chapter is based on a comparative survey and analysis of secondary data from a number of sub-Saharan African countries. In our conclusion, we consider the implications for South African higher education and graduate outcomes for South African students, which have also been discussed in Chapters 17 and 18 of this book. The sub-Saharan African countries we focus on are those whose higher education systems were founded on almost a similar logic to that of South Africa. Universities in these countries were established towards the end of the colonial period. The institutions were elitist and focused on the needs of the colonial economy. The surge in the expansion of the institutions increased after about two decades of independence as the economy changed in response to
indigenisation policies. South Africa seems to be undergoing the same experiences, with policies for more indigenisation of the economy and broadening access for black students to universities characterising higher education and the employability debate. The difference is that compared to other sub-Saharan African countries, South Africa has a better funded and developed higher education system. The other countries did not have this advantage even after two decades of independence, and expansion and access have required the establishment of physical infrastructure from scratch. Methodologically, our comparative approach will have some constraints related to the availability of data and the extent to which such data would provide a useful basis for drawing conclusions. In many respects there are significantly different higher education contexts within Africa, especially in terms of the overall size of the system, participation and completion rates and general perceptions about the quality of the higher education system. However, concerns that the higher education system does not fulfill various expectations from society seem to be uniform throughout the continent. Such uniform concerns provide sufficient justification for a comparative synthesis of available secondary data.

The overall aim in this chapter is to contribute to the debates going on in different contexts in Africa regarding the contribution of higher education institutions to graduate outcomes. The scope of the chapter will therefore be limited to providing arguments and analysis based on secondary data in order to develop conceptual frames to guide further studies in the area. North Africa and South Africa in this respect tend to have near up-to date data and related studies that give a sense of the operations of the higher education system, graduate destinations and outcomes. South Africa for example has bodies such as the Council on Higher Education (CHE) that monitor and report on the state of the higher education system, including assessing whether, how, to what extent and with what consequences the vision, policy goals and objectives for higher education are being realised.

North Africa is similar to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa in terms of offering higher education focused on producing skills for the public sector, with the state being the employer of first and last resort. Another similarity is the provision of free higher education, based on the notion that poor people should have access to higher education as a means of escaping poverty (Devarajan, 2016). An ongoing intervention by the World Bank is contributing to the adoption of benchmarking practices to identify strengths and weaknesses at individual institutions; trends at the national level, and by type of institution; and is generating interest to initiate reforms at institutional, national and regional levels. Studies and data documenting ways in which universities are seeking to find meaningful ways to compare themselves with other institutions around the world, including graduate destinations and outcomes provide a useful basis for comparison across the continent (World Bank, 2012).

The rest of sub-Saharan Africa provides a mixed picture that unfortunately tends towards unlikely availability of quality data. The AUC initiative to develop a centralised system known as EMIS (Education Management Information System) for the whole of the continent has so far not yielded positive results. By 2012, 30 of 46 countries had provided
less than 30% of the internationally required data; with data related to higher education, quality management and TVET the least reported at less than 40% of the required data (African Union Commission, 2014). The AUC, though, under the initiative continues with efforts to focus on collection of data at national levels and transmit the same through regional economic communities to help create African-based continental databases. Much effort is also being expended in creating regional EMIS capacity to enhance policy, resource allocation, statistical processes and staff development. The outcome has been that regional higher education councils, such as the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA), have partnered with the private sector to undertake studies on various aspects of the higher education sector related to graduate outcomes.

The sub-Saharan African context

Higher education institutions in most of sub-Saharan Africa were established during late colonialism in order to train the workforce for the public sector. The most interesting aspect during the initial period revolved around whether to establish universities focused on vocational and technical skills to serve the entrepreneurial and capitalist needs of the colonial economy or those focused on elite professions (see, for example, discussions by Lilford, 2012). In the case of East Africa, Makerere University College, established in 1892 as a technical college, developed into a liberal art leaning institution due to pressure for such an education from the emerging African elite. The Royal Technical College (later University of Nairobi) was established with an initial focus on the colonial needs of settler agriculture (Mngomezulu, 2012). Higher education continued to expand, based on the logic of the ‘human capital approach’ until well into the 1990s, when circumstances forced countries and institutions to slowly begin questioning this model. The focus on developing skills in the university sector is therefore a recent development that has arisen as a response to increasing rates of graduate unemployment. The focus of universities is perceived to be the training of skilled professionals. The preparation of vocational workers was left to a well-developed middle tier of tertiary colleges that offered vocational skills and trades at different levels.

Interest in graduate destinations and learning outcomes is associated with the outcomes of the structural adjustment period, which led to a subsequent downsizing of the public sector, which had been a significant employer of university graduates. A study by Hughes (1987) pointed to the dilemma that most African countries were then facing: the pressure to continue expanding higher education institutions within the logic of the ‘workforce development approach’ with a contracting public sector. The study noted that in most sub-Saharan African countries, the increasing supply of highly educated graduates had exceeded the demand for university level jobs available in the economy, making graduates face a highly competitive labour market. In the case of Kenya, the study shows that the then only university, the University of Nairobi, had expanded its enrolment in excess of 15% while private sector employment only grew at 2.5% annually. The result was that the employment prospects of the
1983 cohort of graduates differed significantly from the 1970, 1975 and 1979 cohorts in terms of ability to find work, likelihood of accepting temporary employment, and willingness to accept employment with less responsibility and with less relevance to their undergraduate training (Hughes, 1987).

In the case of Malawi, a similar tracer study covering the period 1987–1994 showed that the period of seeking employment had increased from an average of 2.5 months in 1987–1989 to an average of 4.3 months in 1994–1995. The number of contacts that a graduate had to make before securing a job increased from an average of seven contacts in 1987–1989 to an average of seventeen contacts in 1994–1995. Instances of graduates changing jobs had also increased because most graduates are employed initially in jobs not linked to their training due to job scarcity and only later move to jobs related to their training (Zembere & Chinyama, 2008).

The conclusions from both studies in Kenya and Malawi have come to mirror the circumstances of university graduates throughout most of the continent; graduates are neither as fortunate nor as few as were their counterparts of the first two decades of independence. The main reason explaining this trend was the fast rate in the growth of university enrolments at the same time as the public sector of most countries was shrinking due to structural adjustment dynamics. Despite these early observations, universities have continued to expand throughout the continent based on the initial logic of a supply-driven public sector labour market. However, the formal private sector is too small to absorb the growing labour force and transition between formal and informal work seems limited. Studies suggest that in the 1960s–1980s, somewhere in the order of 65–90% of all working university and college graduates were employed by the public sectors in most African countries, especially within East Africa. By the late 1980s the supply of highly educated graduates had exceeded the demand generated by most African economies (Hughes, 1987). The problem with the manpower (workforce) approach is that most countries operated a system of guaranteed jobs for graduates, which made it difficult to discern whether the high employment rates of graduates were due to the efficiency of higher education or the unresponsiveness of the labour market.

Trends and determinants of graduate destinations

The higher education sector has the least available comparable data in Africa compared to other priority areas that have been outlined by the African Union Commission (2014). Establishing clear trends in higher education enrolments and the transition to labour markets is in most respects anecdotal. Data from the African Economic Outlook (AEO) (African Development Bank et al., 2012) indicates that it is not just a question of poor quality skills but also a general mismatch. However other scholars such as Balwanz and Ngcwangu (2016) argue that there are several problems with the skills mismatch thesis as it is anchored on poor conceptual and empirical bases, which are premised on human capital theory assumptions. The AEO data from 36 countries suggest that graduation rates in sub-Saharan Africa are broadly similar to those in other parts of the world (with the exception of engineering fields).
The degrees awarded by African institutions do not however align with promising career paths such as telecommunications, engineering, agriculture, information technology, health, banking and education, most likely due to poor career guidance (African Development Bank et al., 2012).

### Table 1  University graduation rates in Africa and the world – 2008–2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Education, Humanities and Arts</th>
<th>Social Sciences, Business and Law</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Health and Welfare</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4% (3% ICT)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10% (1% ICT)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11% (3% ICT)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: African Development Bank et al. (2012)*

Though comparatively, the number of graduates across the disciplines from African universities does not show much divergence from those of the other regions, it is argued here that the situation in Africa should not be tied to that of other regions. Rather, universities should focus on offering skills that are directly related to the development needs of the continent. Much would be gained if, for example, universities focused on offering higher-level skills in agriculture and in the extractive industries, as well as the legal expertise needed to gain control of these industries. Instead, a continent with much more arable land compared to other regions of the world continues to rely on food imports and the importation of skilled labour into well-paying but unfilled technical and engineering occupations in the extractive sector.

What is not clear is where the graduates proceed to after graduation, the quality of jobs they perform and the contribution of the skills they have to overall development. 2012 data by the AEO show that the number of African university students increased from 3.53 million in 1999 to 9.54 million in 2012, the latest year for which full figures are available (African Development Bank et al., 2012). A recent World Bank study puts the percentage enrolment increase between 1998 and 2012 at 3.1% for the bottom 80% of the income quintile and 7.9% for the top 20% income quintile (Darvas, Gao, Shen, & Bawany, 2017). At the same time, expansion of universities has led to declining expenditures and enrolments in technical, industrial and vocational education and training (TIVET), which offers alternative post-
secondary training opportunities for students from low-income groups. Data show that the period 1999 to 2012 that witnessed a surge in enrolments at university-level institutions in the continent also recorded a drop in TIVET enrolments from 7% in 1999 to 6% in 2012 (African American Institute, 2015). TIVET skills are frequently cited as lacking in graduates, thus exacerbating unemployability. The problem is that higher education in most of the continent has not developed vocational curricula that focus on the development of technical skills. South Africa’s recent focus on skill development represents one attempt to introduce such an approach. What this means is that the higher education and employability challenge in most of Africa goes beyond what universities can do. It is more a question of political policy choices that lead to a situation in which the majority of students from low-income groups cannot access opportunities for skill development.

More recently, data by the Africa Centre for Economic Transformation indicate that half of the 10 million graduates from over 668 universities in Africa yearly do not get jobs (African Center for Economic Transformation, 2016). More generally, data seem to suggest that the transition from tertiary degree graduation into employment seems to take longer in SSA than in other regions.

Table 2  Employment status of higher education graduates by age in 23 SSA countries, 200328

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>25–34 years</th>
<th>35–49 years</th>
<th>50–59 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Sector</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Sector</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Active</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Summarised from Maajgard and Mingat (2012, Table 7.4, p.183)

Data from the table above, though a little dated, seem to suggest fairly high levels of graduate employment, especially in the formal sector. The fact that 55% of the 25–34-age cohort compared to 76% and 74% for the 35–49 and 50–59 age cohorts are in formal employment suggests that it takes graduates slightly longer to secure formal employment after graduation. Indeed, studies do indicate that higher levels of education seem to have very little return before age 30 (African Development Bank et al., 2012), which is indicated by the lower percentage of people over 34 who are unemployed. The data are consistent with more recent data covering Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa which indicate that, on average, it takes a university graduate at least five

28 The 23 countries covered in the study are Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, DRC, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia.
years to secure a job in the formal sector, with the graduate unemployment rate in Nigeria as high as 23.1% (British Council, 2016). Much of the reason for this inability to quickly transition into the job market is no fault of the students or universities; it is the structural nature of most African economies, where only 16% of jobs are in the formal sector, and the rest in family-owned firms and the informal sector (Trust Africa/Mail & Guardian Africa, 2015). Widespread concern about the work readiness of graduates also abounds, with employers in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa generally satisfied with the academic knowledge of students, but concerned about their lack of adequate IT skills, personal qualities (e.g. reliability) and transferable skills (e.g. team working and problem solving) (British Council, 2016).

Despite policies promoting the informal sector as a viable possible alternative to redressing graduate unemployment, it does not seem to attract a majority of graduates as the 2003 data from Maajgard and Mingat (2012) show. However, the literature seems to suggest a number of graduates in formal employment also engaged in informal sector activities as a strategy to supplement low public sector wages that have been plummeting over time. The underside to this is that all over Africa, the motivation, commitment and standards of professional conduct of public servants have been eroded by their engagement in the informal sector to the extent that ethical conduct as an outcome of university level training remains in doubt (Bennell, 1983).

In an effort to revitalise the university sector in Africa, tracer studies began to emerge from the year 2000 examining the education levels and employment status of a large number of university graduates in a number of African countries (see for example, Kadzamira, 2003; Kirumira & Bateganya, 2003; Mukyanuzi, 2003; Ncube, 2003). The studies were part of an international research project evaluating the education and employment experiences of large representative samples of secondary school leavers and university graduates in four countries in SSA: Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe (Al-Samarrai & Bennell, 2007). The university graduate sample was drawn from the main national university in each country (University of Malawi, University of Dar es Salaam, Makerere University and University of Zimbabwe), and equally divided between individuals who completed their undergraduate education in 1980, 1987/1988, 1994, and 1999. The overall conclusions from these studies are interesting to note as they point to contradictions that have persisted in most of sub-Saharan Africa with regard to outcomes from university expansion and the fate of graduates. Findings from the four countries agreed that:

• International migration among graduates (the so-called ‘brain drain’) was less than expected.
• The incidence of unemployment among university graduates was very low, disregarding the initial high unemployment due to the time taken to secure a job, as seen in Table 2 (the persistence of the notion of high graduate unemployment levels was also recently confirmed in Kenya by the British Council (2016) study).
• Self-employment among graduates was fairly rare (with the exception of 1980’s graduates in Zimbabwe), while self-employment among school leavers tended to be
quite high and growing over time. (Again, university expansion policies in most African countries have continued to transform middle level vocational colleges to universities, even when it is evident university education is not producing entrepreneurial graduates. This contradiction goes back to when African nationalists opted for a white-collar university education approach as opposed to the technically focused education that had been preferred by the colonial authorities.)

- Despite persistent concerns that large numbers of university graduates are unable to effectively utilise the knowledge and skills they acquired while at university, nearly all the traced graduates in the four countries were in professional occupations that were directly related to their university training.
- The activity profiles for university graduates in the tracer studies showed wage employment dominating and this has not changed a great deal over the years.
- University graduate employees were less likely to be working for the private sector than secondary school leavers. However, the share of private sector wage employment was higher among the 1990s graduates, especially in Tanzania and Uganda.
- The incidence of secondary employment, both wage and self-employment, was generally much higher among university graduates who were in full-time wage employment than it was among school leavers. Nearly three-quarters of 1980s graduates in Uganda had secondary incomes, over 60% in Zimbabwe, and nearly 45% in Tanzania. The percentages were much lower among 1990s graduates, suggesting that it takes time before a graduate is able to exploit secondary employment activities. (In Kenya, the government supported this approach from 1972, when senior public servants were allowed to engage in private businesses. This is now blamed for the high level of economic crimes committed by the elite.)
- The most noticeable feature of further education and training (FET) among graduates from the tracer studies was that so many have studied for postgraduate degrees. Among the 1980s graduates, approximately half had enrolled in PhD and masters degree programmes. In all four countries, relatively more female graduates have studied for these degrees than males. The investment in postgraduate degree training is the result of a number of factors: strong demand to study at overseas universities, as well as for high-value qualifications (most notably MBAs), which are marketable, in both national and international labour markets.

Since 1990, discipline- and institutional-specific tracer studies examining graduate outcomes have been conducted. From 1990 to 2000, a number of discipline-specific studies were undertaken in the context of the post-adjustment period and what implications this had in the quality of training and graduate outcomes (see for example Anyanwu & Iloeje, 1999; Baldauf & Lwambuka, 1993; Batse & Gyekye, 1992; Mayanja, Nakayiwa-Mayega, Adebua, Kabuye, & Kaase-Bwanga, 1999; Winkler, Hartmann, & Schomburg, 1992). Many studies noted the theoretical, rather than practical, nature of graduate training. Universities, even in
professionally orientated degree programmes, had tended to produce job seekers and not entrepreneurs who could create their own jobs or effectively help the private sector develop. A persistent mismatch between the knowledge and skills acquired by graduates and what is required by employers began to emerge. For example, the curricula and teaching methods in agricultural institutions tended to neglect the development of soft skills such as critical thinking and problem solving which would allow graduates to adapt easily to changing demands in the job market. There has also been a continued mismatch in the number of graduates produced in various fields and what is required in the market, due to inadequate labour market information. The findings pointed to the underfunding that most universities had faced in the previous decade. The studies provide useful indications on how the economic circumstances of African countries affected the financial health of universities and the employment options of graduates in the changing social and economic situation in the late 1980s and the early 1990s.

Since 2000, institutional-specific tracer studies have been conducted, largely focused on profiling the institutions as better training alternatives in the face of competition for students and the emergence of a private higher education sector. The positive international press for higher education in Africa had changed following the World Bank’s report in 2000 (Task Force on Higher Education & Society, 2000) and the attempt by African countries to have higher education institutions benefit the countries by training in skills focused on the knowledge economies. Higher education institutions had also improved in terms of their funding levels, given the semi-privatisation of most public universities.

A recent tracer study was undertaken by the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM, 2014). RUFORUM is a consortium of 32 universities in 18 countries in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (ECSA), established in 2004. The study aimed to trace their graduates covering the period 2004 to 2014. The main objective of the tracer study was to establish the location of the graduates, the institutions in which they are employed, how they are performing in respect to the RUFORUM outcomes and in respect to the needs of employers, the competitiveness of the graduates, retention rates after employment, regional distribution, and other relevant factors. The study indicated a higher transition rate of graduates to the labour market and a positive impact of the agricultural skills on local small-scale farmers in all the countries.

Findings from a number of these studies point to the emergence of the private sector, including self-employment, as the major destination of graduates from public institutions. The outcome of this trend is that the public sector began to be stripped of critical skills. Countries such as Kenya have been forced to offer private sector level wages in the public sector to attract some high-level skills from the private sector.
The return of the vocational logic

Policies to increase the vocational content and orientation of universities have included those tailored to increasing articulation between higher education institutions and secondary level schooling, and between the different levels of the overall tertiary education sector. Designing qualification frameworks showing pathways and skills requirements between upper secondary school and related technical and vocational institutions and the variety of tertiary or higher education institutions has been the preferred strategy (Mohameddbhai, 2013). While the main emphasis has been on the transition from academic secondary schools to university, attention has also been paid to other possible transitions, notably from upper secondary equivalent programmes. There have also been attempts to ‘modernise’ the content and focus of training in information and communication technologies, research and innovation as the key drivers not only in the development of new knowledge and skills, but also in the adaptation of new ideas, products and innovative approaches in business, management, processes of production and marketing of goods and services (Hoppers, 2009).

These policies aim at achieving better articulation between university and non-university institutions and enhanced access to higher education opportunities and choices available to upper secondary graduates in academic and vocational tracks. Accompanying the design of qualification frameworks has been the establishment of accreditation and quality assurance authorities, and student loan programmes; governance and management reforms at the institutional level; diversification of funding sources and increased investment of time and resources in research and innovation. But these just remain promises and anticipations and their capacity to cause real transformation and the quality and rate of graduate transitions have not been confirmed.

More broadly, teaching of entrepreneurship courses has been introduced as part of the basic skills courses for undergraduate students. The focus is that such courses be reformed to offer students the opportunity to develop the personal skills that help them identify work opportunities and transform these into business-creation possibilities. In addition, the courses should enable students to learn the technical and managerial knowledge and skills needed for self-employment or to start a business. Countries such as Kenya are urging the University of Nairobi to go back to its origins in the Royal Technical College and to build technical skills and ensure the education system meets contemporary economic and social needs (Juma, 2017).

However, there have also been concerns that the turn to entrepreneurship and vocationalisation has made graduates more unemployable. This is because universities turned to entrepreneurship activities in the first instance not to improve graduate skills but to generate operational revenues (Mamdani, 2007). A survey by the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) has established that 51%–63% of graduates from East African universities are unfit for jobs and ‘lacking job market skills’; the worst records were in Uganda (63%) and Tanzania (61%) (Inter-University Council for East Africa & East African
Business Council, 2014). The survey sought the views of employers in the five East Africa Community (EAC) countries (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi), on the employability of graduates from universities in East Africa.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has tried to show that the focus on higher education institutions as the single explanatory factor for graduate employability is misplaced. Trends from a number of sub-Saharan African countries two to three decades after independence suggest that changes in the structural dynamics of the economy and labour markets may better explain the graduate employability crisis than the inability of the institutions to teach relevant skills. Changes in the structure of the economy can be fast and rapid and outpace the capacity of higher education institutions to respond as fast.

In applying these insights to the South African context, it is clear that as in the case in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, graduate unemployment in South Africa is affected mainly by structural changes in the economy, as well as practices in the labour market that still reflect the apartheid legacy of racial, gender and geographical disparities. The core issue is that South African higher education still demonstrates a division between historically black and historically white universities, which is often an indicator of labour market success for graduates. This is caused by the subjective perceptions of ‘quality’ by employers and professional associations within the economy. This raises critical questions for the South African higher education sector: as the South African higher education sector continues to grow, will graduate unemployment rates eventually begin to increase as has been the case in sub-Saharan Africa? What can South Africa learn from other sub-Saharan African countries regarding private higher education? As the public service was downsized in sub-Saharan Africa (due to structural adjustment), graduate unemployment increased. Will the same occur in South Africa with budgetary constraints increasing and talks in some quarters about a need to reduce the public sector which is said to be ‘bloated’?

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Part C: 19. Destination and outcome trends for graduates from Sub-Saharan African countries


