The University in Africa and Democratic Citizenship

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In the past two decades, many African nations embarked on transitions to democracy, putting into place key political institutions that allow for competitive multi-party elections and liberalising the public realm. In order for democracy to consolidate, however, not only appropriate political institutions are needed; democracy requires democrats to be sustainable. To what extent and how higher education in Africa makes a contribution to democratic citizenship development has remained an open question.

It took a consultation and discussion period of almost three years between the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET), senior researchers and the US Partnership for Higher Education in Africa to establish the Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa (HERANA). Credit must be given to the US Partnership for supporting such a complex and potentially controversial project – and one which would not easily have been funded by a single foundation. Having on board the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Kresge Foundation contributed to the credibility of the project amongst higher education leaders and academics. A special word of thanks must go to Dr John Butler-Adam (Ford), who ‘steered’ the Partnership in this project, and to Dr Claudia Frittelli (Carnegie), who participated actively throughout.

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For the purpose of this study, Afrobarometer methodology has been adapted and certain Afrobarometer data used in comparative analyses. We are grateful to the Afrobarometer for availing these to us.

We also acknowledge the comments received by various critical reviewers on parts or the full draft of this report.

For a description of the various HERANA project components, participants and publications, visit the website at http://www.chet.org.za/programmes/herana/.
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