



HERANA

# Higher Education and Economic Development in Africa: Macro and micro perspectives

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## **RESEARCH FOCUS**

The overall aim of the project is to explore the extent to which universities are affected by, and respond to, changes in economic policies, and growth and development patterns at the national level.

The project consists of two parts, i.e. a macro-level and a meso/micro-level analysis. It will integrate the macro and meso/micro components of the research. The former focuses on the expected role of universities in national economic policies. In the latter part the research will focus on the impact of national economic policies on university dynamics.

### **A. MACRO-LEVEL PERSPECTIVE**

#### **Rationale and aim**

At the 'macro' level, the research will focus on the relationship between economic policy and development on the one hand, and higher education system development on the other.

Key questions here include the following:

- Is there a correlation between the development of economic policy (e.g. industrialisation policy) and changes in higher education policy?
- If so, what is the nature of this relationship? Are there specific instances of attempts to steer the higher education system in line with economic policy?
- Is higher education expansion and/or diversification the cause or consequence of economic policy and development?

#### **Methodology**

Two sets of approaches ("tracks") will be adopted for the study. For the macro study, the first track will consist of undertaking an in-depth review of the international literature and best practice case studies on the relationship between economic policies and development (models), and higher education.

The review of international practice will take two forms:

- A desk-top literature review of the following countries: Ireland; Spain; Singapore; Hong Kong; Malaysia; China; India; New Zealand, Chile, and
- In-depth case studies (including visits): Finland; South Korea, and North Carolina State in the United States.

The second approach will comprise selected African case studies. For that purpose we propose to identify one country in each relevant part of Africa that scores positively on a number of the following criteria, i.e. a relative high level of political, social and economic stability; a national strategy with respect to economic development; a vision on the role of higher education in economic development; a relatively large university in a mid-size to large urban area; and a strategic university leadership that tries to stimulate the economic role of the university. The following countries will be included in the sample: Ghana, Mauritius, Mozambique, South

Africa, Tunisia and Uganda. The advantage of including Mauritius is that it provides an excellent example of a country that has displayed remarkable flexibility in adapting economic and higher education policies to changing circumstances. The disadvantage is the degree of replicability of such approaches given its size and location.

In the African case studies, the macro component of the project will focus on the assessment of higher education and economic policies through interviews with stakeholders in both government and the higher education sector as well as through analysis of relevant policy documents.

Issues that will be explored in this regard include the following:

- What has been the nature of economic policy making during the past decade? In particular, have there been significant shifts, e.g. in industrialisation policy to focus on new sectors – e.g. manufacturing vs agriculture, tourism, information technology, etc.?
- What has been the trend in employment patterns, especially with regard to the various types of skilled labour?
- What has been the nature and level of investment in education and in research and development?
- What changes, if any, have there been in higher education and/or science and technology policy either in response to changing economic policy or independently of economic policy?
- In each country, how much of data is there regarding graduate employment and unemployment?
- To what extent is the output of the higher education system being exported through the 'brain drain'?
- To what extent is the higher education system contributing to 'social development' through the production of adequate numbers of teachers, doctors, other medical personnel, scientists?

For the macro study, in each country interviews will need to be conducted with the following:

- Ministry of Education /Higher Education
- Ministry of Science and Technology
- Ministry of Economic Affairs/Development Planning/Trade and Industry
- Presidency/Prime Minister's Office
- Higher education institutions
- Key non-governmental organisations in the education sector

In each African country, the project will appoint a co-ordinator who will take responsibility for:

- Overall supervision of individuals and/or teams charged with in-country work
- Logistical arrangements relating to the visits of the out-of-country team, and
- Reporting on progress of in-country team/s and final country reports.

## **B. MESO/MICRO PERSPECTIVE**

### **Rationale and aim**

Aim is to explore the way in which higher education institutions in the selected countries have responded to the international and national changes in the economic development models and policies.

The following institutions have been selected:

- Ghana: University of Ghana
- South Africa: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
- Mozambique: Eduardo Mondlane University
- Mauritius: University of Mauritius
- Uganda: Makerere University
- Tunisia: Institution to be identified

Key issues to focus on include the following:

- Education:
  - Entrepreneurial education activities
  - Involvement of external stakeholders in curriculum development and adaptation
- Research
  - Nature and size of contract research
- Innovation
  - Partnerships with external actors, including industry
- Structure
  - Level of institutionalisation of knowledge transfer to environment, e.g. the existence of liaison offices, transfer points.

Key questions include the following:

- How do the universities relate to (inter)national economic structures and actors?
- What are the main economic development oriented activities undertaken by the selected universities in the areas of education, research and innovation?
- What are the effects of national economic policies on the nature of the economic development oriented activities of the selected universities?
- What are the effects of international discourses with respect to the concept of knowledge economy on the nature of the economic development oriented activities of the selected universities?

### **Methodology**

To start with an analysis will be made of the relevant institutional documents. In addition an overview will be made of the available data and information on the institutional activities of interest. Both will be used for making a first 'economic development orientation' description of the universities in question.

In the period August 2008 – July 2009 institutional visits will be undertaken by the project team for discussing the institutional description with the main internal actors, and gathering additional data. The visits will allow the team to produce a state of

affairs report of each of the involved institutions. This will include a list of foreseen actions in the near future (1-5 year).

The institutional reports will be analysed in the framework of the outcomes of the national level studies. Aim is to examine the link between the national economic policies and development models, and the internal university activities. The conclusions will be discussed with the main institutional actors, as well as the identified national actors.

The final outcome is a report presenting the main conclusions of the study and the interpretations of the relationship between national economic policies and development models, and university activities. The international best practices will be used as a frame of reference for identifying possible measures for improving and strengthening the relationship.