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Dilemma of African Higher Education Global Partnership on MDGS and SDGs

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Abstract

Purpose: The concept of global partnership in higher education (GPHE) in relation to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a debatable topic in the 21st century. GPHE seldom addressed the MDGs and SDGs. Yet, global GPHE is expected to be a panacea to achieving MDGs and SDGs. The purpose of this study was to determine the kind of global partnerships (GP) existing in some selected accredited universities in the East Africa Community (EAC¹) and whether they addressed the MDGs and SDGs.

Methodology: The Human Capital Theory guided the study purporting that investing in higher education produces a workforce to address global common challenges. Secondary data was collected from five accredited universities' websites, hence analyzed thematically.

Findings: The results revealed that the majority (80%) of the universities were engaged in student/faculty exchange (80%), joint research (100%), scholarships (100%), capacity building/training (100%); and that their partnerships barely addressed MDGs and SDGs.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: It is recommended that GPHE should incorporate the component of SDGs in their memorandum of understanding (MoU). Likewise, the EAC may consider establishing a body—*EAC Global Partnership Association*—to monitor and evaluate the implementation of global partnerships geared towards the achievement of SDGs. Overall, this study contributes to the implementation of SDGs by providing empirical evidence, insights, and recommendations for advancing GPHE to produce qualified and skilled workforce to transform the world. This study may trigger researchers to collect primary data to determine the extent to which GPHE includes and produces personnel for the achievement of SDGs.

Keywords: *Global Partnerships, Education Partnerships, Higher Education, MDGs, SDGs, EAC Universities*

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¹ Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi

INTRODUCTION

Education is expected to play an important role in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, SDG 4, target 4.7, suggests that by 2030 all learners should have acquired knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development (UNESCO, 2017). Equally, higher education institutions are assumed to take a leadership role in preparing a qualified workforce for the world market and provide the information and knowledge to transform our societies (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021). However, due to the heterogeneousness of countries and higher education institutions, the achievement of the SDGs will significantly be dependent upon global partnerships. Yet, there seems to be a dichotomy between the goals of GPHE and the achievement of SDGs, let alone the MDGs that were not achieved (UN, MDGs, 2015).

The world's common future demands for global partnership to address common challenges. Yet, facing these challenges is not only a burden but also an opportunity to forge new partnerships that can work together to improve the human condition. The global community, especially higher education, should exercise national and international leadership to transform our societies. Thus, at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, the world leaders adopted the UN Millennium Declaration, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and set out a series of time-bound targets, with a deadline of 2015 that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs were the world's time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty (McArthur, 2014; WHO, 2018).

Despite the common and complex challenges, there exist inequalities across and within the countries. For instance, Sub-Saharan Africa having innumerable challenges, ranging from food insecurity, high child, and maternal mortality, while the Asia region has hundreds of millions of people in extreme poverty, and even fast-growing countries fail to achieve some of the non-income goals. Other regions have mixed records, noticeably Latin America, the transition economies, and the Middle East and North Africa. These persistent inequalities undermined the achievement of the MDGs (UN, MDGs 2015). Thus, in 2015, the United Nations (UN), adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as a call-to-action for people worldwide to address five critical areas of importance—people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership—by 2030 (Morton, Pencheon, & Squires, 2017). To achieve the objectives of SDGs, the participation of informal and formal sectors, including higher education institutions, is fundamental. Thus, achieving the SDGs requires all sectors and actors to work together, integrate their resources, knowledge, and expertise (Leal Filho et al., 2021a). Similarly, Agusdinata (2022); Mancini et al., (2022) argument that there is a demand to increase the involvement of universities in addressing the SDGs.

Problem Statement

To participate in the current knowledge economy, higher education institutions (HEIs) are expected to deliver, create, and disseminate relevant knowledge and skills to enhance economic prosperity. While higher education was only indirectly mentioned under the MDG regarding elimination of the gender gap, it is considered an actual goal under the SDGs. Traditionally, most African Universities aim to engage in student/faculty exchange, joint grant making, research, networking, capacity building and university profile. Although, according to Obamba and Mwema (2009), there has been tremendous growth in the investments, number and complexity of North-South and South-South partnerships involving universities in Africa, it is

not clear whether such current partnerships are addressing the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Given the diverse landscape of HEIs, it is expected that through GPHE countries will put together resources to address the SDGs. Yet seldom are the types of GPHE in EAC brought to the fore to determine whether the SDGs are addressed to boost economic prosperity. It is upon this background that this study sought to find out the kind of partnerships that exist in the EAC universities and their implications on the MDGs and SDGs.

Significance of the Study

While some studies have been conducted around the formation of global partnerships and internationalization of higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007), rarely do we find studies on the type of partnerships in higher education, especially those in the EAC and their implications on MDGs and SDGs. Priorities on global partnership in higher education are so diverse. For example, while North America and Latin America give much more importance to international preparedness of students, Africa gives more importance on strengthening research and knowledge production. If this trend persists, GPHE, especially from EAC may hardly ever contribute to the achievement of SDGs. This study will reveal the gaps that exist in higher education partnerships, especially the EAC, hence come up with policies that will ensure that GPHE addresses the SDGs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of global partnership in higher education has become a contentious topic in the 21st century. For purposes of this paper, I adopt Samoff and Carrol's (2002) definition of academic institutional partnership as "a collaboration that can reasonably be expected to have mutual (though not necessarily identical) benefits, that will contribute to the development of both institutional and individual capacities at both institutions, that respects the sovereignty and autonomy of both institutions, and that is itself empowering. . ." (p. 44)

Bailey and Dolan (2011) point out that partnerships between higher education institutions in the global North and South were developed in the last two decades to bridge the knowledge gap between these two regions. The partnerships have improved human and infrastructural capacity. However, the partnerships have been criticized as flowing only one way – from North to South and for lacking genuine sharing. Nonetheless, inclusive partnerships should be a key feature in the implementation of university partnerships geared towards the achievement of SDGs.

However, the process and implementation of this global process is critical. Velhos (2002, p.35) argues that "all previous and existing North-South partnerships have had only limited impact on sustainable development, which is the ultimate goal of development cooperation". As nations become more interconnected worldwide, universities get connected too. Thus, global partnerships are essential in addressing interconnected world challenges. As universities consider and plan their global partnerships, it is imperative that they recognize and consider the SDGs. Yet, according to Goolam (2007) most university authorities in developing nations do not understand the role of universities in MDGS/SDGs and therefore have not integrated them in their university curricula.

Equally, there are benefits in global partnerships. Egron-Polak and Hudson (2010) report that the 2010 IAU study found that "improving student preparedness for a globalized/internationalized world" ranked the most important rationale for institutional

internationalization. Moreover, the most persistent problems facing humankind may possibly be solved by a coordinated effort across many nations. The challenges of poverty, public health, environmental degradation, ethnic and sectarian conflict, and human rights all require a commitment and collective effort that can surpass international boundaries. The borderless nature of these challenges encourages collaborative approaches to shared solutions.

The motivation for global partnership in higher education should not only be based on revenue generation, global engagement, national interest and public diplomacy, student mobility, international teaching, and research, but also to address the SDGs. Among the benefits in globalization—East Asia’s success was based on globalization, especially on the opportunities for trade, and increased access to markets and technology. Globalization has brought better health, as well as an active global civil society fighting for more democracy and greater social justice (Stiglitz 2002, p. 214). Moreover, globalization is a fact of life from which we cannot retreat; globalization, especially higher education partnership can be reshaped to realize its potential for good, including the SDGs (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 215). According to Khaemba (2004) the objective of partnerships, especially student exchange is to enable the university students gain a better understanding of the cultural, economic, and social systems of the countries of the host institutions, while staff exchange is seen as a strategy in working towards international best practices in teaching.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Human Capital theory by Becker (1964). According to Backer (1964), human capital is a physical means of production. Organizations invest in human capital through education, training, and health. Likewise, McConnell et al. (2009) postulates that “a more educated, better-trained person is capable of supplying a larger amount of useful productive effort than one with less education and training,” (p.85). Thus, Human Capital theory suggests that investments in education and training contribute to economic growth and development by enhancing the skills, knowledge, and productivity of individuals and societies (Davenport, 1999).

The Human Capital theory relates to this study in a sense that African higher education is central to the development of human capital on the continent. To achieve the SDGs, African nations must invest in quality higher education and participate in global partnerships to produce a skilled workforce capable of addressing pressing social and economic challenges as contained in the SDGs. This theory highlights the importance of aligning global partnerships to prioritize education quality and capacity building, ensuring that African universities can effectively contribute to sustainable development.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative case study research method (Stake, 1995), which involves analyzing and interpreting text and interviews to discover meaningful descriptive phenomena (Carl & Silberstein, 2003, p.3). However, in this study, interviews were not carried out; instead, the study took a desk research approach, whereby data were collected from a few randomly selected accredited public universities from the East African Community (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi), who are mainly members of the IUCEA. Data mining was done from these universities’ websites between the months of August and September 2015 and a follow-up study in October 2023.

This study was complex given that most universities had not posted on their websites the kind of partnerships they are engaged in. Besides, some universities’ websites were not updated. At

the beginning of the study, using the updated list from the IUCEA Member University Institutions in each Partner State as of March 2014, I intended to apply a stratified and purposive sampling method to select two universities (Public and Private) from each the EAC universities, making a total of ten. However, after randomly visiting the websites of most universities, I realized that most of them had posted very little information on partnerships. In view of that, I opted to adopt a purposive sampling method to select the universities for this study based on the amount of partnership information on their website. Thus, sampled one university from each country as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Sampled Universities from the EAC

EAC—Country	EAC—University
Kenya	University of Nairobi (UON)
Uganda	Makerere University (MU)
Tanzania	Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences MUHAS)
Rwanda	University of Rwanda (UR)
Burundi	University of Burundi (UB)

The data sought from the Universities in Table 1 were qualitatively collected guided by the following questions:

1. What kind of global partnerships exist in some selected accredited universities in East Africa Community—(EAC)?
2. What are the implications of these partnerships in relation to the MDGs and SDGS among the East African Community (EAC)?

RESULTS

To respond to the first question—*what kind of global partnerships exist in some selected accredited universities in the EAC?*—of this study, the websites of the following universities were accessed in August/September 2015 and October 2023: University of Nairobi (Kenya); Makerere University (Uganda); Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (Tanzania); University of Rwanda (Rwanda); and University of Burundi (Burundi).

The University of Nairobi (UON)—Kenya

From the information posted on the website, it was revealed that the UON had partnered with universities and colleges within and outside Africa. The partnerships are rooted in the university's recognition that an education with an international character is necessary to equip students with the knowledge and skills for their survival and growth, in a competitive labor market.²

UON, by the year 2015 had signed over 200 Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Agreements with various institutions and were being implemented in six of its various campuses - College of Health Sciences (CHS); College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS); College of Biological & Physical Sciences (CBPS); College of Architecture and Engineering (CAE); and the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences (CAVS). The university's partnerships with the universities of New England (Australia); Education International, Ghent (Belgium); Toronto University (Canada); Namibia (Namibia); Tianjin

² Retrieved from <http://international.uonbi.ac.ke>

(China); Kenyatta University (Kenya); and Ohio State (USA) were in the areas of student exchange, joint research, and scholarships³.

Further, the UON and Handong Global University had entered discussions on possible collaboration to establish a joint program on entrepreneurship and job creation. Through the partnership, the two universities were to set up an incubation Centre where students would develop products and services that would create employment and enhance national and global development⁴. Data obtained in 2023 revealed that on December 16, 2022, the UON established a global partnership with the Global Center on Adaptation to accelerate climate adaptation in Africa. The university was granted \$140 for research and support climate innovations among youth and women Presently, UON continues to work with international partners to drive their research success and advance global reputation⁵.

Makerere University (MU)—Uganda

Data from the university's website in 2015 revealed that MU had partnered with the following universities: Makerere University Medical School partners with Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in health and medicine. Medical students participate in a rotational exchange program⁶. Additionally, the SIDA education grant which is known as Makerere-Sida Bilateral Research Programme Sida Phase III (2010 -2015) is a bilateral collaborative research program and the largest at the university. The programme was initiated in the year 2000 with the aim of strengthening the capacity to manage and coordinate research towards relevant quality research and innovations for national development. Students who benefit from the programme are selected from Makerere University and four partnering public universities in Uganda—Gulu, Busitema, Mbarara, and Kyambogo.

Makerere Carnegie Next Generation of African Academics Project II (NGAA II) 2013 – 2016 will benefit three other universities in Africa: University of Ghana Legon, University of Cape Town, and the University of Witwatersrand. Prior to this, the four universities implemented the two-year Carnegie supported project (2010 – 2012) which focused on building, nurturing, and retention of the next generation of African Academics. The project funded training of staff at PhD and master's degree level in Makerere University and partnering public universities in Uganda. Phase II of the project (2013-2016) was aimed at enhancing research capacity and retention of the Next Generation of Academics at Makerere University.

Makerere University also participates in the Cambridge Africa Partnership for Research Excellence (CAPREx). This is a partnership project with Makerere University, the University of Ghana Legon, and the University of Cambridge. Inaugurated in October 2012, the project supports the development of African academic research, research management and to enhance internationalization of research competitiveness in the participating universities of Makerere and Ghana. The grant provided opportunities for students to learn from each other's experiences.

It was further revealed that Makerere University is a member of a Consortium of Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA) a project aimed at strengthening doctoral training, student supervision and developing the institutional capacity of members to conduct and lead internationally competitive, cutting-edge research. Workshops conducted through the project

³Retrieved from <http://www.international.uonbi.ac.ke>.

⁴ Retrieved from <http://www.uonbi.ac.ke/node/9069>.

⁵ Retrieved from <https://www.uon.ac.ke/>.

⁶ Retrieved from <http://howafrica.com>

enable faculty and other staff to improve their professional skills and knowledge and enhance their capacity in research governance. The workshops also broaden regional networks, sharing of experiences and learning about best practices in research governance, graduate training, mentoring and supervision⁷

The Joint SLU/Makerere Project on Innovative Doctoral Education for Food Security is a joint SLU/Makerere project also known as the Innovative Doctoral Education for Global Food Security. It focuses on training doctoral students to improve their competence in transferable skills, teaching, and student supervision capacity at both Makerere and satellite partner universities of National University of Rwanda, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, University of Nairobi, Kenya, University of Dar-es-Salam. The program is also aimed at creating collaborative research networks, opportunities for sustainable infrastructure and improved capacity for scientific communication.

Africa Regional International Staff/Student Exchange (ARISE) is another partnership programme of Makerere University. This is an Intra-ACP academic mobility scheme established in 2012 to promote cooperation between Higher Education institutions (HEIs) in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP) regions. Student and staff mobility is a major component of partnerships. The programme aims at increasing access to quality education that will encourage and enable students and staff from the partner countries to enroll for postgraduate studies; it also promotes student and staff retention in the region and enhances competition and quality among participating institutions. Further, the programme also aims at establishing academic networks of international cooperation within Africa. The success of the programme is demonstrated by the development of a sustainable network for intra-African mobility in the fields of Food Security and Sustainable Human well-being. Students are also supported to conduct shorter research and participate in administrative visits between consortium partners who are the National University of Rwanda (Rwanda), Makerere University (Uganda), University of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), University of Ghana (Ghana), University of Nairobi (Kenya), University of Cape Town (South Africa), University of Leuven (technical Partner – Belgium, IEASA [associate partner] –South Africa).

Makerere University is also active in the Development Research Uptake for Sub-Saharan Africa (DRUSSA) project. The project was started in 2011 as a joint programme of three partner organizations two of which are sub-Saharan based, namely the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) at Stellenbosch University, and Organization Systems Design (OSD). The third partner is the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) based in the UK. ACU has 110 African university members. Funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) the programme aims at strengthening Research Uptake Management capacity in 17 twenty-four SSA Universities and influencing over 110 other SSA universities to improve their capacity. Makerere University is one the participating universities⁸.

Makerere University partners with various universities outside the African countries for example with the University of Leuven in Belgium in food security, Scientific communication, and research; with Northwestern University School of Medicine in research and student exchange; with Cambridge University in research, just to mention a few. Makerere university continues to advance in global partnerships, for instance on October 6, 2023, Makerere

⁷ Retrieved from <https://cartafrica.org/>

⁸ Retrieved from <http://rgt.ac.ug>.

university received a donation of an 86-inch interactive smart board/screen from Naechstenliebe, a German charity organization⁹

Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS)—Tanzania

From the university's website, it was revealed that MUHAS has strong partnerships with regional, continental, and international universities in health, research, and education. At the international level, MUHAS partners with the following universities: (i) University of California San Francisco in student exchange, joint research, and training of health personnel. The objectives of the partnership include addressing the shortage of health professionals Tanzania, raising the profile of the two universities, training Tanzania's health workforce at PhD and undergraduate levels and enhancing teamwork in addressing health problems¹⁰; (ii) St. Thomas Hospital (UK) in staff exchange in pediatric ophthalmology, medical retina research; Muster University(Germany) in oculoplastic; (iii) the university has also partnered with the following universities in undergraduate student exchanges: (a) Belgium: University of Antwerp (Belgium), (b) China: *XI'AN JIAOTONG University, Zhe Jiang University*;(c) Germany: University of Leipzig, University of Ernst Moritz, Arndt University of Albert-Ludwigs, University of Witten/Herdecke; (d) UK: Sheffield University, University of Southampton, Queen's University, Barts & The London Queen Mary's School of Medicine & Dentistry- University of London, School of life and Medical Sciences - University College London Medical School, Keele University school of Medicine, University of Manchester; (e) Austria: Medical University of Innsbruck, University of Vienna, Queensland University, University of Newcastle; Sweden: Lund University; (f) Netherlands: University of Rotterdam; (g) Ukraine: Kharkov State Medical University; (h) Scotland: University of Aberdeen

Equally: MUHAS has partnered with the following universities in the postgraduate student exchange program: (a) Tanzania: Kilimanjaro, Christian Medical College (KCM); (b) Kenya: Nairobi University; (c) Uganda: Makerere University. Also, MUHAS has partnered in technical advisory services with St. Thomas Hospital (UK)¹¹

University of Rwanda (UR)—Rwanda

From the university's website, it was revealed that UR participates in the Fulbright exchange program which benefits students and staff. The program which is managed by the US Embassy in Kigali gives grants to staff and students to study in US universities. The grant facilitates students to obtain advanced degrees and conduct research in America¹².

Rwanda University's college of education partners with local and international universities to develop the country's education sector. The college partners with many universities which include Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Kenyatta University, University of Antwerp, University of BUEA, UNISA, Open University of UK, University of Teesside, Delhi University, and University of Alberta. Areas of partnership are wide, and they comprise education, student exchange programs, distance learning, and joint research¹³.

The US MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program gives grants to students from Rwanda to study in US universities. In 2013, the program gave a grant to students in higher learning in Rwanda to study in various foreign universities that partner in the program which include Duke,

⁹ Retrieved from <https://news.mak.ac.ug/2023/10/makerere-receives-donation-of-state-of-the-art-smart-board/>.

¹⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.palgrave-journals.com>.

¹¹ Retrieved from <http://www.muhas.ac.tz>

¹² Retrieved from <http://.rwanda.usembassy.gov>.

¹³ Retrieved from <http://www.ce.ur.ac.rw>.

Michigan State, Stanford universities, the University of California at Berkeley, and Wellesley College¹⁴.

University of Burundi (UB)—Burundi

Data from UB's website revealed that the university established a partnership with the Flemish universities and university colleges and sustainable scientific cooperation was implemented. Phase I started on 1 April 2011, Phase II started on 1 April 2014. The program comprised of 5 thematic areas: strengthening teaching and research capacity in basic sciences and pharmacy; contribution to the improvement of medical education, research and to the quality of healthcare in the community; rural development and food security in the provinces of Ngozi and Kayanza; capacity building for teaching and research in the Faculty of Law; New communication and information technologies¹⁵.

The study revealed that majority (80%) of the Universities were engaged in the following partnerships: Student/faculty exchange (80%), Joint Research (100%), Scholarships (100%), Capacity building/training (100%) (refer to Table 2)

Table 2: Global partnerships in the EAC universities

Partnership areas	UON	MU	MUHAS	UR	UB	%
Student/faculty exchange	√	√	√	√	-	80%
Joint Research	√	√	√	√	√	100%
Scholarships	√	√	√	√	√	100%
Capacity building/training	√	√	√	√	√	100%
Food security	-	√	√	-	√	60%
Health and Medicine	√	√	√	-	-	60%
Entrepreneurship and job creation	√	-	-	-	-	20%
Information technology	√	-	√	√	-	60%

One of the major challenges I encountered in getting information on partnerships at the University of Burundi website is that most of the information is in French. Furthermore, there was limited information. However, it is evident that the university is engaged in the following partnerships: research, health, food security, capacity building, and information technology.

Discussion

The findings of this study imply that the EAC universities are more concerned with their students and faculty having some international exposure and knowledge to be more competitive in the global market. For instance, Khaemba (2004) explains that the objective of student exchange is to enable the university students gain a better understanding of the cultural, economic, and social systems of the countries of the host institutions, while staff exchange is seen as a strategy in working towards international best practices in teaching. It therefore implies GPHE hardly focuses on the achievement of MDGs and now SDGs; instead, the emphasis is on student exchange, cultural experience of the partner university and individual professional development.

Similarly, Egron-Polak and Hudson (2010) report that the 2010 IAU study found that “improving student preparedness for a globalized/internationalized world” ranked the most important rationale for institutional internationalization. No wonder priority number one,

¹⁴ Retrieved from <http://www.rwandaexpress.rw>.

¹⁵ Retrieved from <http://ub.edu.bi>

among the sampled EAC university partnerships is student exchange. Nonetheless, the intention for student exchange programs varies, and the linkage to MDGs and SDGs is unlikely.

Most of these partnerships were based on academic programs, which benefit the matriculating students. From the secondary data obtained through the universities' websites these partnerships did not directly address the MDGs. More light could be shed if MDGs could have been mainstreamed in the partnership policies and implanted thereof. Otherwise, these partnerships had very little to do with MDGs.

The finding of this study concurs with Velhos (2002, p.35) argument that "all previous and existing North-South partnerships have had only limited impact on sustainable development, which is the ultimate goal of development cooperation". Areas of partnerships that were directly addressing the MDGs were not clear. Most likely, this is due to institutional imbalances and priorities. This finding supports Goolam's (2007) assertion that most university authorities in developing nations do not understand the role of universities in MDGS and therefore have not integrated them in their university curricula.

Even with the preceding discussions in mind, we need to understand the implications of the kind of partnerships among the EAC universities in relation to the MDGs and SDGs, which is the focus of question two—*what are the implications of these partnerships in relation to the MDGs and SDGS among the East African Community (EAC)?* Based on the aforesaid findings, it is implied that although economic circumstances are beginning to improve in some areas, the kind of global partnerships in the selected EAC universities hardly focused on the MDGs, due to institutional imbalances and priorities. Areas of partnerships that directly addressed the MDGs were not clear. It therefore means that there was no substantive EAC global partnership policy responsive to MDGs; therefore, global partnerships vary depending on individual university priorities.

The role of GPHE in achieving MDGs, and now SDGs was not explicitly expressed by the universities sampled. This is most probably due to the challenges African universities face. Among the challenges: university ranking; limited programs and facilities; quality of education; and policy priorities. For instance, some universities put more emphasis on teaching and not research; websites are not elaborate, they do not include all programs and activities, let alone updating; scholarships are limited for international students; lack of policies on global partnerships.

Yet, the universities' role is critical in achieving the MDGs and SDGs. Despite this, partnerships impact the partnering institutions and by extension the respective countries. In the area of capacity development, partnerships produce a highly skilled workforce needed to steer local development and generate knowledge required to address the myriad problems of poverty and disease. Partnerships in health empower health workers of partnering institutions with skills to solve health problems as emphasized by Goolam (2007) that higher education should train personnel to address health problems of reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS. If we go by Goolam's argument, then higher education partnerships are fundamental in achieving the SDGs.

Though most of these partnerships did not explicitly address the MDGs, they are not informed by substantive global partnership policy responsive to MDGs. However, there were some ongoing discussions on partnerships in higher education. For instance, the UON and Handong Global University had entered discussions on possible collaboration to establish a joint program on entrepreneurship and job creation, and were likely to embrace SDGs, particularly

eradication of poverty and hunger. But this will depend on the implementation of this collaboration by the partnering universities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In the 21st century, global partnership in higher education is inevitable. It should be used as a vehicle through which the SDGs are addressed. Given that globalization has made the world interconnected and interdependent, most human problems are experienced globally. Thus, the call for collaborative efforts in higher education to address the challenges embedded in the SDGs. The EAC universities have responded positively to the notion of collaborations, but towards what direction? Several universities engage in partnerships to compete for the scarce resources and to generate revenue, especially on student mobility.

Based on the findings of this study, the kind of partnerships in higher education, especially universities from the EAC, failed to address the MDGs. It is expected that a policy on mainstreaming SDGs in the universities' MUs will enhance the implementation and achievement of the same. Nonetheless, the success of this policy should not downplay the diversity of universities as they play a central role in the implementation process. Principally, the success of global partnerships will depend on individual universities who should make deliberate efforts to include SDGs in their MOUs, hence come up with a strategic plan on how to achieve them.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the EAC may consider establishing a body—*EAC Global Partnership Association*—to monitor and evaluate the implementation of global partnerships geared towards the achievement of SDGs. Also, IUCEA should produce a policy that will encourage EAC universities to invest and partner not only with the North, but also, South to enhance eradication of poverty, as one of the goals of SDGs. Given that the existing partnerships did not specifically address the MDGs, the EAC universities in liaison with IUCEA and other stakeholders should make a deliberate effort to address SDGs in future partnerships.

Also, the EAC universities should embrace a culture of shared responsibility, one based on agreed universal norms, global commitments, shared rules and evidence, collective action, and benchmarking for growth to realize the SDGs. Besides, the fact that SDGs provide a platform for inclusive implementation of global partnership, higher education will need to produce a policy on the implementation of the same. This new paradigm shift should be non-partisan with no conditions that are likely to suppress the implementation of global partnerships.

Additionally, the EAC universities should conduct a comprehensive study to determine the HEIs that have started engaging in the implementation of SDGs, the challenges, and successes, to share the successive stories with the rest of the universities. Thus, accelerate the implementation of SDGs in HEIs.

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