Higher Education Collaboration in Kenya: Challenges and Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Higher education in developing countries presents an opportunity both for investment and development, if specific challenges can be overcome. This article looks at the opportunities for higher education in a developing country, Kenya, and how these experiences have enabled an identification of issues that must be dealt with for higher education to grow both as an investment and capacity-building opportunity for developing countries. It offers a brief narrative on the history of higher education in Kenya, and the types of higher education collaborations. Using a case study of a long established transnational education collaborative partnership between INtel College, Kenya, and the University of Sunderland, UK, it explores the framework for such operations and challenges and perspectives of the partnership. Finally, it presents a view of the future of transnational education in a nation which indeed may have relevance in any developing country.

Keywords: Collaborative Partnerships in Higher Education, Commission for Higher Education, Globalization of Education, Kenya 2030 Strategic Vision, Transnational Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Kenya Vision 2030, is the country’s “development blue print designed to transform Kenya into a newly industrialized middle income country providing a high quality life to all its citizens by the year 2030” (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007). This will be achieved by providing globally competitive quality education, training and research to all citizens for their development and enhanced individual well being (Kenya Vision 2030- The Popular Version, 2007).

In Kenya, higher education comprises all post secondary education and training institutes of university level or of a vocational type. Collaborative partnership education (CPE) is all forms of collaborative national education and transnational education including Programmes, services or other sets of studies being offered in the country by various educational institutions.
Collaborations are both local where a local university collaborates with a local post secondary school institution (PSSI) or in transnational educational form. The Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (2002) Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education states that transnational Education is:

all types of higher education study Programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such Programmes may belong to the educational system of a state different from the state in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national system.

Currently, in Kenya Transnational education is by:

1. **Franchising**: Defined as the process whereby a higher education institution (“franchiser”) from a certain country authorizes another institution or organization (“franchisee”) from the same or from another country, to provide it’s (i.e. the franchisers) education services (e.g. the whole or part of one or more of its approved study Programme/qualifications).

2. **Virtual Universities**: Whose only contact with the student is by remote means (electronic or hard copy).

3. **Programme Articulations** (Twinning): Where two or more institutions agree to define jointly a study Programme in terms of study credits and credit- transfers, so that students pursuing their studies in one institution have their credits recognized by the other, and accepted for transfer in order to continue their studies.

4. **Off-Shore Institution Serving as an Examination Body**: An autonomous institution which belongs, in terms of its organization and contents, to one particular national educational system, and offering its syllabi and examinations at accredited teaching institutions in Kenya.

5. **International Institutions**: Offering “international” qualifications that are not part of any specific educational system.

Successful operations in TNE in Kenya, begin with the legalization of collaborative partnerships. The job of the Commission for Higher Education (CHE), Kenya is to oversee the quality assurance and expansion of university education, ensuring sustainability, affordability and relevance. The Commission for Higher Education (CHE) is mandated by the Government of Kenya to “ensure the maintenance of standards, quality and relevance in all aspects of university education and training.” (The Higher Education Institutions Handbook, 2012, p.8). Part of its core function is to plan for establishment and development of higher education and training. Establishment of TNE in the country must be approved and validated through the CHE. This is done through the process of accreditation. “Accreditation is the flagship of the Commission for Higher Education. The Commission accredits institutions and validates academic Programmes.” (The Higher Education Institutions Handbook, 2012, p.11).

Legitimacy and status of an institution and a Programme of study is achieved through accreditation and validation (The Higher Education Institutions Handbook, 2012).

The Universities Rules of 1989 facilitate the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) in the establishment and accreditation of private universities and the Programmes offered therein. The 2004 Rules further enable the CHE to validate diploma Programmes offered by Post Secondary School Institutions (PSSIs) for purposes of advancing the graduands of the same to enter into University education. In addition to this, the PSSIs upon meeting set minimum standards are able to offer degree Programmes through grant of authority for collaboration with accredited universities.

With 1.7 million secondary school students in 2011 there is already heavy demand for university level education.

Less than 20% of candidates who qualify for admission each year actually gain admis-
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