10ᵀᴴ INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOPS ON QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

2018 MEETING OF THE AFRICAN QUALITY ASSURANCE NETWORK (AfriQAN)

And

SYMPOSIUM OF RECTORS, VICE-CHANCELLORS AND PRESIDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES

September 18-20, 2018

Venue: Palais des Congrès, Yaoundé

THEME:
Higher education quality assurance and the promotion of synergies among science, technology and humanities: Towards the attainment of the SDGs in Africa

Final Report and Communiqué

Background

The 10th in the series of International Conferences on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa (ICQAHEA) was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon on September 18-20, 2018. Four professionally-enriching events were bundled into the conference package. These were (a) the main conference; (b) four hands-on workshops; (c) symposium of Rectors and Vice-Chancellors; and (d) Annual Meeting of AfriQAN. The quad events were organised by the consortium of the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi-Africa), Association of African Universities (AAU), African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN), Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'enseignement Supérieur (CAMES), University of Yaoundé 1 and the Okebukola Science Foundation with funding support from the European Union Commission.

The theme of the conference was "Higher education quality assurance and the promotion of synergies among science, technology and humanities: Towards the attainment of the SDGs in Africa". The conference provided a rare opportunity for the higher education community in Africa and partners to reflect on the modalities for promoting synergies between science and technology and the humanities and for enhancing quality in their delivery in the quest to achieve the SDGs.

The conference followed-up the conclusions of the 5th Africa-EU Summit held in November 2017 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire under the overarching theme: "Investing in Youth for Accelerated Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development". Visibility was also given at the conference to a number on-going continental initiatives on improving quality of higher education systems in Africa including (a) Tuning Africa; (b) Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) that supports the Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework and the development of the African standards and guidelines for quality assurance; (c) the Erasmus+ programme; (d) the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Programme; (e) the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions and the Jean Monnet projects; and (f) the Continental Strategy for Education for Africa 2015-2025 (CESA).

The conference took stock of the progress made in implementing these initiatives and discussed the links that should be established between the results achieved and the activities foreseen for the period of 2018-2020 with emphasis on quality assurance and implementation of the SGDs. It should also be noted that students and alumni are expected to play a key role in the next phases of the AU-EU collaboration and an increase of funding is planned for staff and student mobility under the Erasmus+ programme. Consequently, a "Study in Europe Fair" was organized as a parallel event to the ICQAHEA, with stands from all 7 Member States with representation in Cameroun (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom) and the European Union. A thousand visitors were welcomed over two days, reaching to students, PhD candidates, families and university staff.

The conference and the other three collocated events was expected to contribute to two major international conferences to be held in November 2018 in Paris and Barcelona respectively. These are: the UNESCO Global conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education; and International Conference on Humanities and Higher Education: "Generating Synergies between Science, Technology and Humanities".

Objectives

The conference and workshops have the following objectives:

1.   Review recent developments/achievements in promoting synergies among science and technology (S&T) and humanities and enhancing quality assurance in attaining the SDGs in Africa and beyond;

2. Promote awareness among the African higher education community of recent developments in enhancing quality assurance and accelerating regional harmonisation under the Africa – EU partnership, including the continental strategy for Education for Africa 2015-2025 (CESA); the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative; Tuning and Erasmus +; the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Programme; the Marie Skłodowska- Curie actions; and Jean Monnet projects.

3. Provide a platform for discussing the role of synergies among S&T and Humanities and quality assurance in higher education in attaining sustainable development goals in Africa;

4. Document best practices from other regions of the world on promoting synergies among S&T and humanities, and enhancing quality assurance in higher education in attaining the SDGs and draw lessons for the African region;

5. Foster the acquisition of skills in (a) the implementation of the Addis Ababa Convention on mutual recognition of qualifications in Africa; (b) measurement and modelling of quality in higher education; (c) quality assurance of open and distance learning delivery systems; (d) strengthening effective implementation of LMD reforms; (f) setting up and running effective quality assurance units at the institutional level; (g) Tuning and Credit Transfer; and (h) developing project proposals for the Erasmus+ and intra-African academic mobility programs.

Sub-themes

1. Recent regional developments in promoting synergies among S&T and Humanities and enhancing quality assurance in attaining the SDGs: lessons from other region;

2. Regional Quality assurance and harmonization Initiatives in Africa : the continental strategy for Education for Africa 2015-2025 (CESA); the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative; Tuning and Erasmus+; the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Programme; the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions; and Jean Monnet projects.

3. The role of synergies among S&T and Humanities and quality assurance in higher education institutions in attaining the SDGs in Africa and beyond;

4. Best Practices in Developing a Quality Culture at The Institutional and National Levels and Tackling Academic Corruption;

5. The role of research and development in promoting synergies among S&T and enhancing quality assurance in higher education institutions in attaining the SDGs

Participants

The conference was attended by 280 participants from 35 countries, which included 5 countries of Europe, 51 Vice-Chancellors/Rectors of Higher Education Institutions, 20 Directors of Quality Assurance of Universities and 12 Heads of National Quality Assurance Agencies.

Highlights of Presentation

The Minister for Higher Education of Cameroon, and President in Function of the Council of Ministers of the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) H.E. Jacques Fame Ndongo declared the 10th ICQAHEA open. The Minister welcomed participants to Cameroon and to the 10th edition of the Conference. He thanked and congratulated all the partners that synergized towards organizing the 10th edition of the Conference. He singled out the outstanding political support of the African Union and the financial support of the European Union. The honourable Minister stated that going by the theme of the conference, the higher education community in Africa and the partners have opportunity to promote synergy within the national settings and the continent; adding that Science and Technology and the humanities could be mobilized for human development by drawing strength from each other.

Arnold Demoor of the EU Delegation did the formal co-opening of the Conference and the Study Fair by the European Union. He underlined that young people, skills and education were at the forefront of the Africa-EU partnership and that the way that demongraphic change will be managed politically and economically will define the future of the contrinent and other regions of the world, Europe for one. In this perspective, creating jobs and opportunities for young people will be essential as they will be the agents of the socio-economic development of the continent in the years to come. He added that EU was committed to increasing the number of Africans that would benefit from Erasmus +. He charged universities to innovate and conduct research that should be used to develop societies.

Earlier, the Rector of the University of Yaoundé I, Professor Joseph Zango Belinga expressed appreciation for the opportunity to host the 10th ICQAHEA, while welcoming delegates to the conference. He reiterated that the social, political and economic landscape has greatly affected higher education and has generated strong requirement for quality; hence the need for quality assurance.

In the same vein, the Chairman, ICQAHEA, Professor Juma Shabani welcomed participants on behalf of the International and Local Organising Committees of the Conference that was put together by a consortium of Organisations; the AU, EU, AAU, AfriQAN, GUNi-Africa, , Okebukola Science Foundation and the University of Yaoundé I. He informed participants that the Conference series has had significant impact on policy formulation and implementation on quality assurance in Africa; adding that the 10th ICQAHEA will make it possible for African

countries to further key into realizing the SDG goals. He concluded his address by briefing the conference on the intension to publish a compilation of the proceedings of the previous conferences.

The President of AfriQAN and Secretary General CAMES, Professor Bertrand Mbatchi addressed the conference in both capacities appreciating the President Paul Biya for his quest for the development of higher education which is contributory to the hosting of the 10th ICQAHEA in Cameroon. While enumerating the achievements of CAMES, he stated that the theme of the conference has a major bearing on the policy thrust of his organization.

Professor Peter Okebukola, President GUNI-Africa, Professor Etienne Ehouan Ehile, Secretary General, Association of African Universities (AAU), and Dr. Yohannes Woldertensae, Senior Education Expert, African Union Commission presented goodwill messages to the Conference on behalf of their organisations.

The African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) General Assembly was held during the Conference on Thursday, 20th September 2018. The President, AfriQAN, Professor Bertrand Mbatchi, AAU Secretary General, Professor Etienne Ehile, and AfriQAN Coordinator, Professor Jonathan Mba, delivered remarks and goodwill messages at the meeting. The AfriQAN work plan 2018-2019; subscription and membership dues were part of the issues discussed at the meeting.

The 10th ICQAHEA proceeded in 5 Plenaries, 2 Special Sessions, 2 Plenary Information Session, 2 Plenary Panel Discussion Session, and a Workshop (Parallel Session) with a total of 14 reports and papers presented. The presentations were followed with discussions during which the sub-themes of the conference were thoroughly examined and far-reaching recommendations made.

Communiqué

We, the participants at the 10th International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa (ICQAHEA) with the theme *Higher education quality assurance and the promotion of synergies among science, technology and humanities: Towards the attainment of the SDGs in Africa* held at Palais des Congrès, Yaoundé, Cameroon from 17 – 20 September, 2018 agree as follows:

Regional Developments in Promoting Synergies Among Science and Technology and Humanities Towards Attaining the SDGs

Note:

-        The recent regional developments that are promoting synergies in Science and Technology and humanities towards attaining the SDGs.

- The global collaboration of science and humanity and its consequent world of merging cultures.

- That the SDGs are better attained by a combination rather than competition between science and humanities.

- The national efforts in Ministries, Academies and the National Quality Assurance agencies in this synergy.

- That the Ghana Academy of Arts and Science (GAAS) reflects this synergy in its nomenclature as well as its activities.

- That the Academy of Science of South Africa runs an annual lecture in humanities.

- That the 28 national quality assurance agencies have developed minimum standards to expose students of both science and humanities to the world of science and humanities through their general studies courses.

- The challenges associated with the promotion of these synergies at the national level, which include limited partnership, funding, poverty and corruption.

- That less than half of African countries have adopted Science, Technology and Innovation policy.

- The efforts of some African countries and higher education institutions in promoting these synergies and the challenges they encounter in the process.

- That ultimately all knowledge is one and useful and the research we do across the various academic disciplines are part of the single knowledge.

Recommend

- That national quality assurance agencies and the higher education institutions should focus on increasing synergies between science, technology and humanities.

- The reform of African Science, Technology and Innovation policies to sharpen, focus and promote synergies between science and humanities.

- That higher education institutions should adopt a multi-/trans-disciplinary approach to foster synergies between science and humanities for the attainment of the SDGs.

- That all higher education stakeholders should contribute to dissolving the divide between science and humanities.

- Efforts should be directed at simplifying and demystifying the science language to facilitate the synergy.

ERASMUS+ and MSCA: Instruments Which Promote Synergies and Cooperation in Higher Education

Note

- Erasmus+ and MSCA promote synergy and cooperation in higher education.

- The European Union's strategic partnership with Africa, which promotes stronger political partnership.

- That education is at the forefront of the cooperation between Europe and Africa

- The European Union's support for primary and secondary education and VET programmes

Recommend

- African higher education institutions should take advantage of the opportunities presented by Erasmus+ and MSCA for enhanced regional integration and stronger collaboration.

- Heads of African higher education institution should join in raising awareness of Erasmus+ and MSCA in their institutions.

The Role of Research and Development in Promoting Synergies Among Science and Technology and Humanities Towards Attaining the SDGs

Note

- Higher education can create partnerships through Science, Technology and Innovation and the humanities to improve the quality of life.

- Science is beyond our natural classification.

- The 21st Century is an age of change and higher education is the key to these changes.

- The job of the future will be in areas where there is synergy between Science and Technology and the humanities.

- The transition from MDGs to SDGs and the performance of African countries with respect to these UN initiatives.

- That the number of African researchers is low and the situation is worse with STEM.

- Job search, particularly for graduates, has taken the place of research in African societies.

Recommend

- That higher education institutions should give priority to applied and active research.

- That there should be a balance in Science and Technology and humanities research for the development of the 21st Century skills.

- That government, higher education institutions and the local citizens should be brought together to determine the technology that works for the people.

- The curriculum should be re-engineered to prepare the students of today for the jobs of tomorrow.

- Government should focus research through the development of national research agenda and fund it.

- Higher education institutions should track their alumni who should be encouraged to give back to the institutions to promote the kind of research that is desirable for Africa.

- Students should be involved in developing policy framework for the higher education institutions.

Plenary Panel Discussion: African Union-EU Harmonisation Initiatives

Note

- That the "African Union-EU harmonisation initiative" should be captured as African Union Harmonization Initiatives and that different stakeholders are involved.

- The next steps in AU's harmonisation initiatives, which are to continue implementing the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM); Domestication of the African Standards and Guidelines (ASG) developed under the Africa-EU HAQAA initiative at national and regional levels; Development of anAfrican Continental Quality Framework; and Implementation of the continental African Quality Assurance Agency.

- That the ASG, which is in three parts and has now been finalized is one of the tools for the implementation of PAQAF.

- That pilot reviews and consultation for the ASG are currently on going as preludes to the expected official and political endorsement by the AU.

- The important role of alumni in the development of higher education all over the world.

- The establishment of the African Student and Alumni Association.

- That Tuning Africa is a Pan-African multi-disciplinary approach to harmonization in the continent and focused on skills and competencies rather than the duration of study.

Recommend

- Strong advocacy and adequate sensitization of stakeholders on all the AU's harmonization initiatives.

- African countries should begin to put in place strategies towards domesticating the AU harmonisation initiatives.

Unlocking the Potential of Education and Research by Improving Access to Digital Infrastrciutures and Technologies: Africa Connect

Note

- The High cost of Internet (Bandwidth)

- The update on the Africa Connect Programme

- That inadequate infrastructure, in terms of capacity and dedicated network for Higher education institutions is prevalent in Africa

- The poor quality of infrastructure of campus network, and national backbone infrastructure in many countries.

- That between 2011 and 2015, EU co-funded AfricaConnect project, which brought to life the 1st sustainable regional Research and Education Network in Sub-Saharan Africa.

- That AfricaConnect2, which started in 2015, aims to build other sustainable regional Networks in Africa to create a pan-African network fully connected to the global Research And Education Network.

- Africa is still the least connected continent on the planet.

Recommend

- African countries should develop national strategies as well as collaborate to develop regional strategies on ICT infrastructures;

- African Governments should support the development of National Research and Education Network (NRENs).

- Higher education institutions should build capacity for optimal utilization of the Networks.

Quality and Innovation in Higher Education: The EU, its Member States and Africa Contributing to the Achievement of the SDGs

Note

- The achievement of Erasmus+ project in building capacities of African universities in professional degree programmes.

- That Tuning enhances mobility management, which mainstreams what others are doing to add value to their partners and to themselves.

- Tuning has created opportunities to discuss with employers with a view to producing skills that are relevant to them. It has also created synergies by bringing different persons, disciplines and higher education institutions together.

Recommend

- Faculty should be well educated on the Tuning methodology to create the desired impact at the institutional level.

- Conferences like the ICQAHEA should be organized exclusively on Tuning to throw more light on its harmonisation propensity for more stakeholders to understand and buy-into the initiative.

Promotion of African Integration and Synergies between Higher Education Institutions through Teaching and Research: The EU's Jean Monnet Action

Note

- Jean Monnet activities provide international higher education cooperation opportunities in the area of academic cooperation since 1989 when it was launched by the European Commission and designed to promote the study of European (regional) integration by means of teaching and research.

- That the initiative is open to academics from institutions in Europe and around the world through modules, chairs, centres of excellence, projects, and networks.

- Eighty six countries with more than 1000 universities are offering the Jean Monnet courses as part of their curricula with over 4,700 projects in the field of European integration studies and more than 1,700 Professors and 250,000 students every year.

- Africa has poorly benefited from Jean Monnet since inception in 1989.

- Jean Monnet has impacted Gulu University, Uganda significantly and neighbouring institutions as well as communities around the institution.

- The impact the Jean Monnet Network has made in the East African Community (EAC)'s regional integration and in the EU-EAC cooperation;

- The proposal to create an African Academic Network to promote regional and political integration in Africa.

    Recommend

- The Conference should constitute a small group to explore with the Jean Monnet Action on how to concretise the proposal to create the African Academic Network.

- That more African higher education institutions should key into the Pan African academic program inspired by the Jean-Monnet model to promote teaching and research on regional integration.

- Africa should develop its own model of Jean Monnet named after African fathers of eminence that will promote networking and political integration in Africa in view of the Continent's peculiar socio-cultural and political diversity.

Symposium of Rectors, Presidents and Vice-Chancellors

The Symposium discussed the role of Vice-Chancellors, Rectors and Presidents in the promotion of synergies among science, technology and humanities: Towards the attainment of the SDGs in Africa. The following recommendations emerged:

- Higher education institutions, led by the Heads of the Institutions, must accept and understand the importance of the SDGs and galvanize strong institutional support for their achievement.

- Heads of higher education institutions should sensitize their academic communities towards achieving the SDGs.

- Higher education institutions should be structured to deliver on inter-disciplinary approach to research. In addition, emphasis should be given to the recruitment of staff with inter-disciplinary qualifications and exposure.

- Research agenda that is guided by a well articulated Science and Technology policy should be pursued and implemented by higher education institutions.

- The private sector and members of the community should be involved in the formation of research teams.

- Data-backed research findings should form part of the bases for the review of the curriculum in the education sector.

- Students should be encouraged to acquire skills in areas other than their primary areas of study.

- The Vice-Chancellors, Rectors and Presidents of higher education institutions should have the political will to implement recommendations from conferences like ICQAHEA.

- Higher education institutions should choose one of the SDGs with the aim of focusing their research efforts to its direction for the realization of the goal. AU and AAU should work with Heads of higher education institutions to achieve this.

- All African institutions higher education should undertake an internal reflection on how to apply the SDGs in their own practices and programmes.

- All African institutions higher education should publish the results of these reflections.

- The African Union Commission, the AAU, AfriQAN, CAMES and GUNI-Africa should consider producing guidelines on how higher education institutions could implement the SDGs.

Tuning: Research Work by the Students

- Training of students has been deteriorating due to increasing enrolment and depreciating infrastructure.

- The quality of students in higher education institutions depends to a large extent on training at the primary and secondary levels.

- Some gaps within and between disciplines within and across higher education institutions.

- Some students go to school not well prepared for the training they are going to receive.

- Some teachers are not well motivated or competent to deliver the courses they teach.

- Challenges of governance impact negatively on pedagogy and learning

Recommend

- Higher education institutions should give due emphasis to quality to improve the employability of graduates.

- Competences of academic staff should be improved through training and retraining programmes.

- Academic disciplines should be well developed to facilitate mobility. In addition, benchmarks on mobility should be developed to improve the process.

- Staff motivation should be a matter of priority to governments.

- Higher education institutions should involve students in their process of achieving the SDGs.

- Higher Education Institutions should develop their institutional research repositories that would serve as reference materials for researchers across institutions.

Quality Assurance Towards the SDGs: Ideas and Commitments

Participants at the 10th ICQAHEA had the opportunity to discuss and propose ideas and commitment as take-away from the conference.

The following were recommended:

- The SDGs should be included in the institutional strategic plan to ensure that the goals are achieved and implemented;

- HEIs should develop plans to disseminate the SDGs across their communities of academics;

- Well-articulated plans should be put in place to monitor the implementation of the SDGs;

- Universities should collaborate for the achievement of the SDGs;

- Curriculum should be harmonized gradually from national to regional and to continental levels to facilitate the Tuning instrument for the purpose of easing student mobility;

- Universities should be the hub to discuss socio-political issues with the aim of generating solutions to identified challenges;.

- The AQRM tools should be developed for gender balance in governance of higher education institutions;

- AQRM should be well-disseminated for self-assessment and improvement;

- Institutions should create active ICT platforms to share their best practices;

- HEIs institutions should take advantage of the AAU TV for capacity building in various aspects of higher education;

- Documents on all AU initiatives and other initiatives within the Continent should be well disseminated amongst Heads of HEIs;

- Emphasis should be placed on developing skilled and competent workforce to achieve the SDGs;

- Participants should actively share decisions at the 10th ICQAHEA through different media. Participants should keep their communication lines open with each other after the conference;

- Education should be prioritized as a public good and Government and HEIs should harness the potential of the youth to achieve the SDGs;

- Higher education institutions should align their research policies to the SDGs and Agenda 2063.

Appreciation

Finally, participants express gratitude to the Global University Network for Innovation GUNI-Africa, the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) and the Association of African Universities (AAU) for organising the 10th International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa on *Higher education quality assurance and the promotion of synergies among science, technology and humanities: Towards the attainment of the SDGs in Africa.* We also appreciate the following organisations for their support to the Conference: European Union (EU), CAMES, University of Yaoundé I, and Okebukola Science Foundation (OSF).

Dr. Biodun Saliu
RAPPORTEUR GENERAL
September 20, 2018