

## **Revisiting African Higher Education in Line with the Ideals of Pan-Africanism: Bringing Agenda 2063 Aspirations to the Forefront**

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### **Abstract**

‘Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want’ defines new ambitions for Africa by indicating where the leaders want to see the continent by the year 2063. It also recognizes that the aspirations set in this agenda cannot be achieved spontaneously, but requires a conscious and deliberate efforts and actions to create a generation that will derive the Agenda and defend Africa’s interests. In this context, academic and research institutions, specifically Higher Education Institutions, play a key role as they enhance change via innovation and knowledge. The role of higher education in helping the realization of Agenda 2063 can be matched with many targets listed in the Agenda. This paper attempts to uncover the role of higher education in ensuring the realization of the Agenda. Firstly, it presents, in a coherent manner, different aspirations scattered through the Agenda having direct relation with higher education and higher education institutions. Secondly, it illustrates the key role of higher educations in empowering African people and preparing them for the realization of Agenda 2063’s aspirations. It specifically calls for increasing access to education adopting different modes including: African Virtual and E-Universities, non-degree awarding vocational trainings to increase creativity by increasing knowledge of science and technology. It also calls for creation and expansion of scholarship opportunities through higher education institutions’ partnership with the private sector, to ensure that finance will not be an impediment for talented African children with the potential to transform the continent. Thirdly, the paper calls for revision of African higher education’s curricula to derive attention to teaching Pan-African ideals, values, literature and culture. This comes from the aspirations of the Agenda that calls for African identity including revitalization and modernization of traditional institutions, and adoption of African languages as official working languages. In this regard, the paper brings the idea of launching graduate program curricula that offer specialization in African studies, African literature and Developmental Studies from African perspective. Mobility programs among African universities, in the form of Academic staff and Student Exchange programs, for experience sharing and creation of common understanding on African matters is another proposal of this paper to empower higher education in Africa and align their businesses with this big continental agenda.

### **Introduction**

Fifty years after the establishment of the Organization of African Unity in 1963, Heads of States and Governments of African Union, in 2015, set common goal for the next fifty years.<sup>1</sup> The new goal officially referred to as ‘Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want’ defines new ambitions for Africa by indicating where the leaders want to see the continent by the year 2063. It also recognizes

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<sup>1</sup> African Union, *Agenda 2063, The Africa We Want*, (2015) available at:  
[https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063\\_popular\\_version\\_en.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf)

that the aspirations set in this agenda cannot be achieved spontaneously, but require conscious and deliberate efforts and actions to create a generation that will derive the Agenda and defend Africa's interests. In this context, academic and research institutions, specifically higher education institutions, play a key role as they enhance change via innovation and knowledge. The new continental plan for transformation needs to be backed by a human capital with potential to realize the aspirations set in the Agenda. The role of higher educations in feeding human capital that has all necessary skills, and in terms of developing science, technology and innovation is not negligible. This paper has tried to address some steps that have to be taken by African higher education sector to set a fertile ground, to the possible extent, for the realization of aspirations set by the Agenda. It focuses on possible reforms to be taken in higher education to mainstream Agenda 2063 in the daily business of HEIs. In doing so, it depended on the review of some policy documents, speeches, reports and other documents available on the African Union's website and other sources. The document of Agenda 2063 itself was analyzed to discover and explain contents having relevance for the activities of HEIs. Available literature on the topic was also utilized to bring useful information to support the conclusions made and directions suggested by this paper. No data was collected by the author in the form of interview, questionnaire or other data gathering tools. Accordingly, this paper is a presentation of already available information scattered in different sources in a coherent manner. The purpose is to bring them for discussions and organize them for quick reference.

The paper is organized in four main parts. The first part is introduction to the title and contents of the paper. The second part makes quick revision of the Agenda 2063 document to disclose contents relating to higher education and to discuss how higher education is addressed there. The third part discusses the role of higher education in the implementation of the Agenda and tries to provide specific tasks that HEIs can do to help the realization of Agenda 2063' aspirations. Finally, part four summarizes the discussions made in this paper and provides concluding remarks.

### **Key Issues in Agenda 2063 Related to Higher Education**

Education has not been explicitly and independently mentioned as a title in the seven aspirations of Agenda 2063. However, the role of education in the implementation of these aspirations cannot be neglected. This Agenda looks forward to seeing Africa 'the development of which relies on the potential of African people, especially women and youth.' This cannot be achieved without mobilizing educated man power that can drive the continental change goals and aspirations, and thus education, in general, and higher education, in particular, has an indispensable place in the implementation of all aspirations of the Agenda. This importance is recognized in the Agenda itself as the goals and targets set under some of the aspirations have addressed higher education and provided for what is expected to be achieved. Higher education has also been among the 15 flagship projects crafted under Agenda 2063. This section tries to coherently present the way

higher education is mentioned in goals and targets of the aspiration of the Agenda as well as the flagship projects designed to achieve aspirations listed under the Agenda.

### **Higher Education in the Goals and Targets of Agenda 2063' Aspirations**

Agenda 2063 is framed in the form of different aspirations for the continent in the future. It lists seven aspirations for the continent that political leaders of the continent aspire to achieve by the end of the fifty year for which the Agenda is set. Each aspiration has a clearly framed target lists to be achieved by the year 2063. Aspiration 1 mentions that Africa looks forward to be 'amongst the best performers in global quality of life measures and provides different strategies through which this will be achieved. The strategies include sustained investment in higher education, science, technology, research and innovation, and the provision of basic services including education. This indicates that higher education is explicitly mentioned as one strategy through which the aspiration will be achieved. In this regard, HIEs have crucial role to play in terms of research and innovation. The Agenda further aspires that 'access to post-graduate education will be expanded and strengthened to ensure world-class infrastructure for learning and research, and support scientific reforms that underpin the transformation of the continent.' Furthermore, the African Union has made it clear that in order to achieve Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063' 'prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, it requires that Africa makes significant investments in education with the aim of developing human and social capital through an education and skills revolution emphasizing innovation, science and technology.'<sup>2</sup>

Another aspiration of the Agenda where the role of higher education is mentioned is aspiration 3, which aspires that there will be transformative leadership in all fields, including academic institutions, at continental, regional, national and local levels. To achieve the aspirations set by the Agenda, taking into account the works of higher education, it is a must that the leadership and management of higher education be strong and innovative. It needs to have room for the aspirations of the Agenda, and thus requires leaders that have exceptional commitment for the transformation of the continent and that are aware of the continental agenda together with strategies set for its realization.

The idea of making Pan-African ideals part and parcel of school curricula is mentioned as one target under Aspiration 5 of the agenda. It is mentioned under this aspiration: "Pan-African ideals will be fully embedded in the school curricula and Pan-African cultural assets (heritage, folklore, languages, film, music, theatre, literature, festivals, religions and spirituality) will be enhanced." It is clear that this task can be better achieved at higher education level even though it can be included, to some extent, in the secondary and primary schools. HEIs' role in this regard is crucial

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<sup>2</sup> African Union, *Education, Science and Technology*, on African Union official website, available at: <https://au.int/en/education-science-technology#>

in terms of revising their education curricula and revitalizing them in line with these aspirations. This is because HIEs have potential to conduct research and need assessment to identify possible ways of embedding Pan-African ideals in their curriculum, and also to create networks of universities from different countries and regions to pull together for the achievement. Working in cooperation with different institutions helps to ensure inclusion of best practices, ideas and cultures everywhere in the continent. Thus, the revision of curriculum as well as developing new ones will be another homework for African HEIs to realize the goal of embedding these values in school curricula. The action plan annexed to the Agenda and which forms part of it has also provided for education as a base to empower African people and put them in place to support the implementation of the agenda.

### **Higher Education in Flagship Projects: Pan-African Virtual and E-University.**

The flagship projects of Agenda 2063 refer to key programs and initiatives that have been identified as significant projects to accelerating Africa's economic growth and development as well as promoting African common identity by celebrating its history and its vibrant culture. The Flagship projects encompass amongst others: infrastructure, education, science, technology, arts and culture as well as initiatives to secure peace on the continent. One of these projects, which directly addresses higher education, is The Pan African Virtual and E-University (PAVEU). PAVEU is proposed to address the needs of Agenda 2063 for accelerating development of human capital, science and technology, and innovation through increasing access to tertiary and continuing education in Africa by capitalizing on the digital revolution and global knowledge; reaching large numbers of students and professionals in multiple sites simultaneously- anywhere, anytime; and by consolidating African initiatives and strategies on accelerated development of human capital; science, technology and innovation.<sup>3</sup> The PAVEU project is being operationalized as the Open, Distance and E-Learning arm the Pan African University (PAU) - a decision that was approved by a meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology that took place on 23-25 October 2017 in Cairo Egypt and that was endorsed by the Executive Council in January 2018.<sup>4</sup> The Second Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063 indicates that 10 online courses' content and curricula have been developed. It also indicates that online Information Technology equipment has been procured. Furthermore, it is reported that the structure and cost implication of the PAVEU has been reviewed by the Permanent Representatives Committee's (PRC) Sub-Committee on Structural Reforms. The report also indicates the belief that the process will lead to the adoption of PAVEU's structure.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Official Website of Pan-African Virtual and E-University, <http://paveu.africa-union.org/pan-african-virtual-and-e-university/>

<sup>4</sup> African Union, *Invitation to Representatives of the Media for Official Launch of the Pan-African Virtual and E-University*, on AU Official Web site, <https://au.int/sw/node/37898>

<sup>5</sup> African Union and African Union Development Agency – NEPAD, *Second Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063*, 55, (2022)

## **Higher Education in Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-2025**

African Union Commission has developed an African ten year comprehensive education plan to support creation of a new African citizen who will be an effective change agent for the continent's sustainable development as envisioned in Agenda 2063. The "Continental Education Strategy for Africa" (CESA 2016-2025) articulates the ambition of the African Union to build an integrated continent through a harmonized education system where intra-African mobility and skills portability are standard. It is a 10 year plan with a mission of reorienting Africa's education and training systems to meet the knowledge, competencies, skills, innovation and creativity required to nurture African core values and promote sustainable development at the national, sub-regional and continental levels. One of the pillars of the strategy is the strengthening of capacities through a coalition of actors to enable a credible participatory and solid partnership in Education.<sup>6</sup> It calls for a paradigm shift towards transformative education and training systems to meet the knowledge, competencies, skills, research, innovation and creativity required to nurture African core values and promote sustainable development.

The strategy recognizes that alternative modes of education that fall under the informal and non-formal education and training label have provided learning and training opportunities to millions of African children, youth and adults. And in line with this, it provides that the concept of lifelong learning, which is also embedded in these two alternative modes of education, deserves recognition by African policymakers. Strategic objective 9 of CESA provides for revitalizing and expansion of tertiary education, research and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness. It clearly sets objectives of promoting international research and development cooperation based on continental interest and ownership, and expanding competitive grants and awards and other support mechanisms to nurture young academics and accomplished researchers. Strengthening quality (post)graduate and post-doctoral education to cater for expanding tertiary education as well as meet demand for high level human capital is another specific objective under strategic objective 9 of CESA. These are indications that higher education has been a concern of the document, and strategies have been set in relation to it.

## **The Role of Higher Educations in the Implementation of Agenda 2063**

It is widely recognized that higher education is critical to promoting faster technological growth, value addition to raw materials and natural resources, improving countries' ability to maximize economic output, and building human capabilities.<sup>7</sup> It is also said that consensus is emerging

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<sup>6</sup> Opening Remarks H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor, Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) on the AU-UNICEF High Level Side Meeting on 'Reimagining Education in Africa' 20th September, 2021. Available at: <https://www.africanunion-un.org/post/reimagining-education-in-africa>

<sup>7</sup> AfricaFocus, *Africa: Higher Education Must Be Higher Priority*, AfricaFocus Bulletin, March 17, 2015 (150317), available at: [Africa: Higher Education Must Be Higher Priority \(africafocus.org\)](http://africafocus.org)

among African governments, the business community, scholars and Pan-African development agencies that higher education can facilitate national development and regional integration; and that it has an important role in fostering citizenship and building democratic societies.<sup>8</sup> CESA 16-25 recognizes that higher education provides conducive environment for the development of science, technology and innovation, and a suitable exploitation of the full potential of these three fields to support sustainable growth and socio-economic development. Higher education also improves competitiveness with regard to the global process of research, innovation and entrepreneurship requiring increasingly quality knowledge production from universities in African countries.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the role of higher education in realizing aspirations of Agenda 2063 is tremendous. This section tries to indicate some of the roles that higher education can play in the implementation of Agenda 2063 and also suggests possible ways of discharging such roles.

### **Accelerating the Development of Human Capital, Science Technology and Innovation.**

The realization of Agenda 2063 requires the continent to first invest in the people and empower them to carry on the challenges and go through them to make the Agenda’s aspirations a reality. “One of the pillars of Agenda 2063 is the need to invest in the peoples of Africa as its most precious resource. According to Agenda 2063, these resources include their nutrition and health, their access to shelter, water and sanitation, expanding quality education and strengthening science, technology, innovation and research.”<sup>10</sup> All aspirations of the Agenda require qualified human power for its realization, and higher education plays a key role in this regard. Strong justice institutions and respect for huma rights require qualified lawyers and judges. Boosting intra African trade requires competent economists who can work on different policy dimensions and forward the outcome of the economy. The same holds true for all other aspirations that they must be backed up with knowledge equipped generation for their realization. As higher education institutions are centers for producing competent graduates, their role in this regard is pivotal. They need to shape the generation towards the aspirations of the Agenda in addition to working to produce a human power that fits for the great continental Agenda. The issue of education, in general, and HE is directly mentioned in Aspiration 1 of the Agenda (A prosperous Africa, based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development). One of the goals set to achieve this aspiration is “Africa with well-educated citizens and skills revolution underpinned by science, technology and innovation.”

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<sup>8</sup> [Id.](#)

<sup>9</sup> African Union, *Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25)*, available at: [29958-doc-cesa - english-v9.pdf \(au.int\)](https://www.africanunion.int/sites/default/files/documents/29958-doc-cesa%20-%20english-v9.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), *Key issues on Agenda 2063 and their relevance to the education sector in Africa*, available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/key-issues-agenda-2063-and-their-relevance-education-sector-africa>

The priority area attached to this aspiration and goal is “Education and Science, Technology and Innovation skills driven revolution.”<sup>11</sup> In addition, STISA 2024 acknowledges that the AU Agenda 2063 recognizes Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) as multi-functional tools and enablers for achieving continental development goals; and that the Agenda, further, emphasizes that Africa’s sustained growth, competitiveness and economic transformation requires sustained investment in new technologies and continuous innovation in areas such as agriculture, clean energy, education and health.<sup>12</sup> This is the place where higher education comes in context and all efforts by HEIs related to development of human capital must always take into account the need to promote science, technology and innovation and strive to empower citizens to produce man power that fits to this purpose.

The author further adds that there is a need to promote Agenda 2063 itself for its better realization. It is when African peoples really understand what it is and what is in it for the continent that they can be committed and work for the realization of the Agenda. Therefore, the Agenda, its values and aspirations, strategic goals set for its realization and all other relevant elements need to be promoted and well known by the people. In this regard, the role of higher education is pivotal in organizing public lectures, giving trainings, and promoting panel discussions focusing on Agenda 2063 to create man power that is aware of the Agenda and works with commitment for its realization. This being important, the author further brings the idea of forming Agenda 2063 clubs in Universities for undergraduate students. The aim of the clubs will be to teach the students about the Agenda because it has not been made part of the curriculum, to organize debates and role plays on the issues in the agenda and perform other related activities. Students may also engage in different national, regional or continental competitions, as may be arranged and those who perform well may be selected as ‘Agenda 2063 Ambassadors’. The end goal is to create a new generation of young people who can breakthrough to transform aspirations to reality. Thus it is useful that HIEs support extracurricular activities to empower young Africans and make them weapon for the required change.

### **Revising and Developing Curricula for African Studies, African Cultures, Languages and Literature that Promote Agenda 2063’ Aspirations**

As discussed in Section One, the revision of curriculum as well as developing new ones will be homework for African HEIs to realize the goal of embedding Pan-African values in school curricula. The author suggests that embodiment in the curricula of African values can be achieved through different ways. The first option is incorporating some courses focusing on teaching of African values in the already existing curriculum by way of revision. This can work for many disciplines. For instance, African customary laws can be developed as one course and can be

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<sup>11</sup> African Union, *Goals & Priority Areas of Agenda 2063*, available on AU website at:  
<https://au.int/agenda2063/goals>

<sup>12</sup> African Union, *Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024)*, at 11

included in the existing curriculum for the study of law. The study of languages, sociology, folklore, and other humanity studies can also be enhanced through the same way. The second option is developing new curriculum focusing on African studies, African literature, folklore and other African values. This option, specifically, calls for the opening of postgraduate studies in the above mentioned fields, which focus on African history and the aspirations of Agenda 2063 in its contents. The revision of curriculum also needs to take into account the need to make African languages a working language. In this regard, it is important to develop academic programs for the study of African languages and to promote researches and publications in African languages to foster their development and help them become official languages.

It has been argued that both formal and informal education, if equipped with the right skills, could support increased productivity and stronger, more inclusive economic growth across the continent; however, the majority of Africa's skills development schemes are supply-driven and disconnected from the demands of the labor market.<sup>13</sup> In this regard, the author argues that the revision and development of curriculum should also involve the participation of private sector as a stakeholder. This is because such an arrangement helps to include the practical aspects in the curriculum to ensure that education delivers skills that the market needs. It also helps creation of a lasting connection with industries for internship, externship and practice by students to help them develop the skill. It is essential that HEIs understand what skills and competencies are demanded by the labor market so that they can better prepare their students for employment.<sup>14</sup> However, in most African countries, the increase in tertiary enrolment has not translated into a comparable improvement in employment opportunities. This is partly due to the mismatch between the number and type of graduates and the needs of the labor market. Indeed, there are growing complaints by employers that graduates are poorly prepared for the workplace.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, private sector involvement in the revision and development of curriculum makes the education responsive to the needs of the market.

In addition to the above-mentioned points, the revision of curriculum and developing of new ones needs to take into account the need for popularizing science, technology and innovation as potential career paths in schools at all levels. The Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA 2024) underlines that realizing the full potential of science, technology and innovation to support sustainable socio-economic growth and development, and improving African competitiveness in global research and innovation, requires that Member States should continue to expand the availability of quality post-graduate education, and in particular programs

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<sup>13</sup> Conference Report, Pan African High Level Conference on Higher Education, Nairobi, Kenya, 25-27 April 2018, ED-2018/PACE/ME/2, at 15.

<sup>14</sup> USAID, *African Higher Education: Opportunities for Transformative Change for Sustainable Development*, VIII, (2014)

<sup>15</sup> ([AfricaFocus](#)), *Supra note 7*

leading to doctoral qualifications.<sup>16</sup> The mission of STISA-2024 is to accelerate Africa's transition to an innovation-led, knowledge-based economy. In line with this, curricula need to give emphasis for science, technology and innovation.

Finally, the revision and development of new curriculum has to give place for the mobility of academic staff and students across the continent. This requires harmonization of curriculum among African HEIs and providing similar accreditation standards. The goal of bringing about united Africa will be realized when there is common understanding among the people. To this effect, strategic selection of some academic programs and making them harmonized at regional or continental level promotes common understanding. The harmonization of curriculum and introducing common accreditation standards for academic programs will foster the possibility of mobility of academic staff and students across Africa's HIEs and will help to fill possible human resource gaps, avoid brain drain and create new generation of young people, the students, who have good awareness about the continent.

### **Ensuring Access to Education**

The vision of creating prosperous Africa whose development is driven by its own people requires educating the citizens and equipping them with necessary skills. This, in turn, will be achieved only if access to education is there for all. But according to PACE conference report, a large proportion of children, youth and adults do not acquire basic reading, writing and numeracy skills due to the lack of or inadequate access to education as well as the poor quality of learning opportunities available to them.<sup>17</sup> As to higher education, despite high increases in tertiary education enrolment, there is still unmet demand.<sup>18</sup> Though ensuring access to education to some extent involves a policy matter and requires government decision making, HEIs can play a great role in shaping their academic program by introducing different modalities of delivery. HEIs can make their admission policy inclusive and increase access to education for vulnerable groups like economically disadvantaged students, women, persons with disability, internally displaced persons and refugees. The admission policy needs to introduce a kind of affirmative action to become inclusive and expand access to education.

The other way of ensuring access to higher education is by developing different modalities of delivering education. With the advancement of technology and innovation, we need to deviate from the traditional way of delivering education, and make use of technological outputs to make education accessible to everyone everywhere. In this regard, it has been mentioned in Section One that Pan African Virtual and E-University has been designed as one flagship project for the implementation of Agenda 2063 with the aim of addressing the need for accelerating the

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<sup>16</sup> (African Union), STISA 2024, *Supra note* 12,

<sup>17</sup> (Conference report),*Supra note* 13, at 10

<sup>18</sup> ([AfricaFocus](#)), *Supra note* 7

development of human capital, science and technology and innovation through increasing access to tertiary and continuing education in Africa by capitalizing on the digital revolution and global knowledge. This is a continental move, and higher educations need to develop programs of this kind in their respective countries and regions. Online courses, open and distance learning and skills-related non-degree awarding programs must be developed and offered to everyone. Sometimes, participation in higher education can be affected by the individual's domicile and the geographical distance of institutions. E-learning can help avoid this problem. Adopting different modalities of delivery, including open distance and online programs in addition to regular in person programs, also help to avoid such barriers and realize education to everyone everywhere.

One challenge identified in the implementation of PAVEU is inadequate staffing and equipment to support the delivery of online courses, including studio recording equipment and a reliable power supply plant.<sup>19</sup> This challenge may appear in the process by different Universities to implement the proposed online and virtual learning platform. But still the role of higher education in reducing this problem cannot be neglected. HEIs can contribute in this regard by conducting research to develop infrastructure for learning and expanding Information Communication Technology groundwork and modernizing laboratories. It is also advisable, as far as the author is concerned, to mainstream ICT in all curricula and help learners grasp technology by themselves irrespective of their field of study. We need to strengthen to develop digital skills and competencies at all levels: through partnerships to support ICT in education and adoption of Media and Information Literacy (MIL), and Internet safety within the education curriculum.

Furthermore, expanding scholarship opportunities for study programs can be another way of ensuring access to higher education. **Scholarships provide an opportunity for people to get access to education.** Scholarship programs can play a vital role in providing opportunities for young people and adults who would otherwise not be able to afford to continue their education.<sup>20</sup> In such circumstances, scholarships play pivotal role in ensuring that talented individuals who cannot afford to pay tuition fees are not excluded due to their economic circumstances. In addition, scholarships enable students to have more time to focus on their education and studies without worrying about their economic status, and this will enhance their professional quality after graduation. However, providing scholarship may be challenging for African HIEs due to lack of funding and other relevant resources. Therefore, HEIs need to look for different funding opportunities. In this regard, the implementation of higher education in the second Continental Progress Report in Implementation of Agenda 2063 indicates that Namibia employed promoting

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<sup>19</sup> African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) website, <https://www.nepad.org/agenda-2063/flagship-project/pan-african-virtual-and-e-university-paveu>

<sup>20</sup> UNESCO, Sustainable Development Goals, Unpacking Sustainable Development Goal 4 Education 2030 Guide, ED-16/ESC/GD/1(REV. Oct. 2017, at 14, (2017)

private sector investment in higher education as one strategy to promote higher education.<sup>21</sup> The author stresses the importance of calling upon private sector to invest in education and the development by universities of strategies for partnership with private sector to fund scholarships. The strong partnership approach among key education stakeholders will enable us achieve more results, while tapping on each other's strengths and in alignment with national government priorities and plans.<sup>22</sup> Several African countries have undertaken reforms to improve the management and the relevance of higher education and to strengthen the capacity of universities by means of partnerships with the private sector and civil society in general.<sup>23</sup> The ensuring of access to education through scholarship, therefore, requires higher education institutions to work with all stakeholders and partners like industries, civil societies, private companies, international organizations and government agencies. Scholarships also need to be transparently targeted towards young people from disadvantaged background.<sup>24</sup>

### **Research and Publications for the Advancement of Knowledge**

The role of research in higher education remains a vital source of knowledge, development, and sustainability of any nation, at the present moment of rapid advancement in information and capacity building.<sup>25</sup> Research plays a great role in the business of higher education and African universities must play a great role in terms of policy researches and recommendations to influence public policy towards sustainable development and continental agenda. Coming to the implementation of Agenda 2063, the enhancement of Pan-African cultural assets requires identification of these assets, ascertainment of their contents, recording them in articulated manner and publishing them to promote understanding of them. It will be only after these values are described and ascertained that they can be taught by imbedding them in the curriculum as described above in this section. Therefore, research and publication become inevitable for achieving this aspiration, thereby, calling upon and reminding HEIs of their role in enhancing knowledge through research. In addition to conducting research in African cultural and traditional assets as well as languages, HEIs also play a great role in organizing national, regional and continental cultural festivals, research conferences and other similar events for the communication of research outputs and promotion of African values in line with the aspirations of Agenda 2063. These, therefore, are also roles that come out as other tasks lined up for African HEIs as their role in the implementation of the concerned Agenda.

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<sup>21</sup> (African Union and African Union Development Agency) – *Supra note 5*, at 20

<sup>22</sup> (Opening Remarks H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor), *Supra note 6*

<sup>23</sup> (Conference report), *Supra note 13*, at 19

<sup>24</sup> (UNESCO), *Supra note 20*

<sup>25</sup> Peace I. Amala and Raymond C. Ukaegbu, *The Role of Research and Development in Higher Education*, Ambit Journal of Educational Research and Reviews Vol. 3(2) pp. 72 – 76, (2020), available at:

[1583102437AJERR216.pdf \(ambitjournals.org\)](https://doi.org/10.5281/1583102437AJERR216.pdf)

## **Ensuring Strong Leadership for Transformation**

Aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063 shows that there will be transformative leadership in all fields (political, economic, religious, cultural, academic, youth and women) and at continental, regional, national and local levels. This is a call to academic institutions to transform their usual businesses and introduce changes that give due attention to the continental agenda. Nowadays, there is growing evidence that higher education institutions are no longer just communities of academics whose only concern is teaching and scholarship. Universities are now major enterprises in a competitive world and they need to be effective, efficient and publicly accountable if they wish to prosper.<sup>26</sup> A key challenge for the leadership of universities, therefore, is to move their institutions towards thinking and acting more strategically, attempting to manage higher education institutions in a way that does not threaten academic freedom - a critical element of higher education quality institutions.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, African HEIs also need to be innovative and to bring about all possible changes by crafting new strategies for the realization of Agenda 2063. This in turn, requires a strong leadership that is committed to take the higher education industry to a new horizon. The author argues that HIEs are even expected to contribute more than structuring their own leadership; they must influence leadership in other institutions by disseminating research outputs and delivering research-based trainings on the concept of transformative leadership to other institutions, thereby, building capacity for leadership in all sectors.

## **Concluding Remarks**

In 2012, African Heads of States and Governments adopted a new goal for the continent, which is officially referred to ‘Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want.’ The Agenda defines new ambitions for Africa by indicating where the leaders want to see the continent by the year 2063. There was also a common understanding that the aspirations set in this agenda cannot be achieved spontaneously, but requires a conscious and deliberate efforts and actions to create a generation that will derive the Agenda and defend Africa’s interests. The main goal of the agenda is to see an integrated and politically united Africa, based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism; the development of which is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for its children. The achievement of these goals inevitably requires the empowerment of African people to drive the aspirations of the Agenda and work towards its realizations. It also requires technological advancement of the continent through research, science and innovation, and the role of higher education institutions in this regard is crucial. This paper tried to see higher education in the context of Agenda 2063 and to coherently present some ideas on the way higher educations can better support the realization of aspirations set in the Agenda. Accordingly, the paper forwarded the following main points:

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<sup>26</sup> (USAID), African Higher Education, *Supra note* 14, at 35

<sup>27</sup> Id,

- Even though education is not set as one among the seven aspirations of Agenda 2063, the issue of education, in general, and higher education, in particular is, mentioned in the goals and strategies for the implementation of the Agenda as well as in the flagship projects and continental education strategy of 2016-2025.
- Higher education institutions have a lot to contribute for the realization of the Agenda in many different ways. The first and foremost role of HEIs is developing human power required to work towards creating the prosperous and united Africa. In this regard, the provision of quality education in all fields of study is mentioned as instrumental in equipping African people.
- HEIs can also revisit their curriculum and revise them and also develop new ones in line with the ideals of Pan-Africanism and aspirations set in the Agenda. To make this effective, the development of new curriculum that focuses on African studies, languages and literature; harmonization of curriculum; accreditation standards to enable students and staff mobility across African Universities; and the need to focus on science, technology and innovation to reshape the curriculum are forwarded as tasks that HEIs can undertake.
- Ensuring access to education is another role that HIEs can play towards the realization of Agenda's aspirations. For this specific task, the author mainly forwarded the idea of introducing online and open distance education platforms modeled after Pan-African Virtual and E-University so as to enable citizens learn from everywhere at any time. The provision of education through online platform has the relevance of doing away with the geographical and physical distances as an impediment to education. Making education inclusive by considering gender, disability, internally displaced persons and other issues also stands as another strategy suggested by this paper to realize access to education. Partnership with private sector and all other stakeholders to secure fund for scholarship is also forwarded as one strategy to make sure that no talented African child is excluded from higher education due to financial constraints.
- Research and publication for the advancement of knowledge are well known inherent tasks of higher education. Taking this into account, this paper forwarded that African HEIs must focus on research works in science, technology and innovation to empower African people and to promote creativity. It also added that the research work must be geared towards African customary rules, languages, literature and other societal values to ascertain them, publish them for better understanding and help the task of embedding them in education curriculum.
- Finally, the role of leadership in higher education is mentioned as one area where HEIs can play a great role. Agenda 2063 indicates aspirations to see transformative leadership in all fields including academia and African universities to realize this. In this regard, it is argued that the traditional role of higher education as delivery of education and provision of scholarships must be transformed, and HEIs must engage in competition towards creation and technological advancements. The role of HEIs in transforming leadership should also be geared towards helping other sectors to develop leadership skills by developing curriculum and delivering trainings in this regard.

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