

# COVID 19 and The Future of Internationalization of HE: Some Insights and Perspectives from Africa

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# Context

- \* The COVID 19 Pandemic is unprecedented
- \* Serious impacts globally on all sectors including HE
- \* Africa's HE –grounded by the pandemic
- \* Impacts on Internationalization globally
- \* Internationalization has characterized the development of Africa's HE sector (Teferra, 2008; Jowi, 2010)
- \* Due to several challenges- Africa's HE cant effectively respond to the pandemic
- \* Teaching, Learning, Research, Community engagement-grounded
- \* What is the response?
- \* What are the opportunities? The future of internationalization?

# Introduction

- Internationalization is at the core of higher education (IAU, 2010)
- Africa's higher education is largely an offshoot of internationalization initiatives
- Internationalization has continued to shape & characterize Africa's HE
- Africa engages with internationalization amid several challenges – some of which bring in risks
- Main rationale – enhance research capacity, academic quality, curriculum strengthening, new generation of academics (IAU, 2010)
- Needs to produce, seek & adapt knowledge to overcome its developmental challenges
- Must be part of global knowledge economy – locally relevant and globally competitive
- Because of limited resources, this can only be achieved by collaboration among African countries & their HE systems
- Hence the need for a strong continental HE ‘space’ & partnerships

# Policy Priorities

- \* Returning to normalcy- strategies/policies towards re-opening universities and catching up with lost time
- \* Continuation of learning- biggest hurdle now is provision of learning opportunities when students are at home.
- \* Policies and frameworks for quality online learning
- \* Mitigating effects on international research projects
- \* Policies for deepening research collaborations/ mobility
- \* Strengthening regional and continental efforts
- \* Support for investments in ICT, teacher development & students support
- \* Localization vs globalization-address local issues for relevance
- \* Affirmation of policy positions

# Challenges and Barriers to Policy Alignment

- \* Inadequate policies and strategies to facilitate internationalization.
- \* The rise of nationalism and protectionist (inward looking) policies
- \* Emergent disruptions- research projects, forums, conferences etc.
- \* Impacts on regional laws, regulations and protocols e.g regional cooperation
- \* Funding for Internationalization- worsened by impacts of pandemic on economies
- \* Shifts in priority during the pandemic.
- \* Endemic risks associated with internationalization
- \* National and institutional capacity deficits- learner, teacher preparedness
- \* Weak ICT infrastructure to support online learning
- \* Lack of preparedness- this was like an emergency and caught universities unawares

# Opportunities for Universities

## **There is no crisis without opportunities**

- \* Time for renewal/ relevance of universities to their missions.
- \* Enhanced and meaningful collaborations- hold together
- \* Development of supportive policies and strategies
- \* Investment in ICT for e-learning, new forms of engagement- support internationalization
- \* Change of attitude -New approaches to work, teaching and learning
- \* Support African Centres of excellence- specialized training/interventions
- \* Strengthening intra-Africa collaborations
- \* Participation and strengthening global knowledge networks
- \* Government commitment to enhance funding- especially for research

# Best Practices

- \* Mutuality
- \* Trust and openness
- \* No one size fits all- awareness of contextual differences
- \* Communication
- \* Reciprocity
- \* Deal with risks and unintended consequences

# A peep into the future

- \* A brave new world could be possible
- \* Opportunity for renewal and stronger internationalization
- \* Critical role of universities
- \* Internationalization will even be more important
- \* Enhanced mobility... reverse mobility?
- \* Need to do more together...we are joined at the hip
- \* Mitigate unequal/unfair collaborations to reduce risks of internationalization
- \* Strong human spirit
- \* Need for a call for renewed commitment to internationalization and global engagement
- \* Africa's resilience – has faced serious catastrophes in the past



# A new dawn

