



Report on the Conference: State of education in Africa
Organized by Africa-America Institute, 3 - 4 May 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya

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The Dean of the Faculty of Education was an attendee of the Conference on State of education (SOE) in Africa which was **organized by Africa-America Institute during 3 - 4 May 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya, Crowne Plaza Hotel**. The conference was held under the theme: Opportunities for transforming higher education in Africa. Ford Foundation was the sponsor of the conference, while the esteemed partners were General Electric Company, Carnegie Mellon University—College of Engineering, Education Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA), and Robert Bosch Stiftung. University partners were United States International University-Africa, University of South Africa (UNISA), ASHESI, and Enterprise Development Centre.

The conference program covered discussion panels, keynotes, fireside chats, and special presentation. Dynamic discussion, thoughtful commentary, and provocative questions were destined to be hallmarks of the presentations and panels. Dynamic discussion was based on a presenter, a moderator, and panelists. Discussion panels addressed a mosaic of themes and topics including: educating Africa's next generation, African entrepreneurs disrupting education, innovations for inclusion and increasing representation in higher education, transforming higher education for the workforce of the future, leveraging strategic partnerships to advance higher education, and the role of curriculum in changing the narrative in Africa. Beside, there were keynotes mainly about the state of education in Kenya and reforming higher education in Africa. In addition, fireside chats, which concentrated on youth opportunities and learning in Africa paid special attention to ways of how to change the native Africa.

MasterCard Foundation Scholar's Program, ESSA/Bosch Foundation and Africa's Great Civilization Screening gave special presentations which targeted different themes. The MasterCard, Ford Foundation and Robert Bosh Stiftung targeted the implementation of educational projects and programs in some of the African countries. Ford Foundation efforts revealed an ongoing transformation in higher education in Africa south of the Sahara. Countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya have good cooperation in higher education and have obtained scholarships for some of their students to study abroad. In addition, these countries

have managed to double the intake in higher education institutions. However, Ford Foundation reported their concern about university academic programs, students' life in universities and access to good education in universities. Love of a subject will continue to be a challenge and basic education should provide universities with intake of high standards. Addressing the issue of leadership and rationalization, the degree quality should first be rationalized giving ample place in curricula for philosophy and not to concentrate only on mathematics, science and computer.

It is true that the majority of African children now go to school and many of them opt to access institutions of higher education. However, African students are faced by insufficient resources and infrastructure in these institutions. Teaching teachers for secondary schools, interaction with training bodies and developing capacity of young people are challenges which should be resolved. Education is a critical sector and needs to be prioritized. However, any effort to develop education needs funds. It seems that in many countries public funds are not always sufficient to cover the costs of education reform. Therefore, there is need to draw the private sector to take a more active role in the preparation of students and the provision of jobs. This urges universities to rethink what kind of graduate they have to produce. The answer pertaining to this issue could be sought in the several innovations followed by many organizations which focus on technology and keep pace with developments in it. Education should be approached in stages. Universities should direct their programs for not just a certificate which a graduate possesses but also for developing a young person in a manner which takes into consideration how the world around is thinking. In order to translate this vision into action the introduction of leadership education is a necessity.

The main themes discussed in some of the presented panels included developing program in school, enhancing competition in arts, sports, exchange of students, encouragement of team work, as well as giving opportunities to skills building. In addition, there were themes concerning with national strategies for education sector, renewal of curricula, vocational education that to be transferred into technical institutions. Enhancement of critical thinking and giving Professors in universities more power, were deeply discussed.

The presentation of MasterCard Foundation has focused on technological challenges, quality in high education, developing young leaders who need social and academic support, and to adopt a trend that leads to institutional transformation in the future through partners, Non-Governmental Organizations and scholars programs (recruit, educate, prepare, transition).

Beyond institutional transformations, there are the influences of other institutions and stakeholders which, when taken into consideration, can allow and promote the exchange of the best and on-going work across focus area. There is critical need to build institutions and provide the necessary capital invested in higher education. It is fortunate that Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, and Togo have already gone ahead in investment in higher education.

Other panels and discussions focused on the theme of the absence of short plans in teaching and how it could be carried out in Africa. In order to provide a solution for this shortcoming it is suggested to establish institutes of agriculture and natural resources because agriculture is the major area of promise in the continent and has been changing altogether. To this effect emphasis will be to develop and train young people in the field in the countryside. At the same time these institutes can be platforms of research and training of young researchers, curricula development, and involvement of companies in scientific research, and share information with universities. Governments have a role to play and their funds should go to general education. Young Africans have hunger to science and technology. Thus change congruent with this line depends on the environment created to prepare a generation in science and technology. This could be done through thorough training of people and communication with those working on the same issue. Concerning the education investment fund, there is a loan program for African students in leading global universities where 73% of them rely primarily on private sources of funding. The number of African students in USA top 50 universities is growing. Over the next 15 years there will be around 20,000 African students in these universities. The current landscape depicts the presence of highly educated Africans who are equipped to bring innovation and prosperity to the continent. However, there is still a need to focus on quality and quantity.

Recognition of African universities demands orientation of their activities towards domestic markets, definition of practical mission and vision, consideration of international ranking, excellence, right academic entrepreneur, growing reputation, and ability to attract scholars. There is also the possibility that universities focus on domestic markets and local needs and give due consideration to the aspirations of customers. Technology can be involved to solve diversity in African communities, taking into consideration that diversity itself can be regarded an asset. Planning for children programs have to pursue their integration into community. In addition, companies have to give more effort in promoting education in Africa (role of private sector).

In summary, the foregoing outlines have revealed on how to invest in the development of human capital. The majority of the discussions emphasized the need for transforming higher education mainly through simple and careful planning with clear and well defined strategies which aim at the successful employment of graduates.

Robert Bosch stiftung, although working in health education in Africa, owns schools in Swaziland, with more than 50 years of experience in teaching mathematics and English. Their ESSA (Education Sub-Saharan Africa) program became a practical model in Africa. In this program Efforts targeted mainly faculty and faculty development, demographics of institutions and faculties, achievements in education by Africans, leadership development, building capacity, teaching teachers, aggregate data for local authority, and development of ambitions.

It is noteworthy that economic growth in Africa has led to job creation. However, the crucial question concerning the type of workforce needed for the future remains not fully resolved. Higher education institutions should seek ways to change the attitudes of students not only to think about themselves and their personal aspirations but more to tie all this with the requirements of the job market. For this purpose there is need in include in the studied subjects skills of how to seek job opportunities and how to design solutions. Moreover, key innovations are to be included in the curricula pertaining to specific sectors, specific industries, employer demands, and how to know where job is. Transition of higher education to the determination of future job opportunities requires data and information, exchange of information, donors who provide funding for the first phase and second phase, training programs, technical development and skill development programs. Transforming knowledge into action requires very specific training in the art of entrepreneurship and leadership and the skill of running a business. If African universities are keen to focus on the future and on what is required to be done, they need to reconsider their curricula, revise teaching methods and employ integrated teacher training. Entrepreneurship could be promoted though the transmission of innovations, keeping pace with global trends on future skills, development of financial literacy and giving due consideration to vocational training.

Moreover, reconsideration of teaching content and methods to comply with the changes in the job market demand is very crucial. There should be good transition from primary to secondary school, adoption of new tools for assessing students, quality relevance of disciplines, research

teaching and training and encouragement of commercialization of higher education with high cost efficiency.

In order to change the native in Africa, the conference also emphasized the systematic use of educational resources, connecting Africa together, building of capacity in strategic areas, enriching programs on diversity, group foundation, conservation of energy, education and environment, nationalization of programs, selection of primary education, competition, equity bank, equity leading program, and transition program.

The lessons learned from this conference are:-

- 1- There is a pressing challenge that basic education should supply universities with students with high standards.
- 2- A growing number of African youth opts for quality education.
- 3- There will be an increasing demand for qualified workforce in the future.
- 4- Some African countries have benefited from educational programs and funds offered by international organizations.
- 5- Education in Africa is in a transitional stage in keeping pace with international trends.
- 6- There is a growing world interest in Africa's great civilizations.