

The Promise of African Networks: Internationalisation at Stellenbosch University and the University of Botswana

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An important reason for Africa's brain drain is scientists' need to connect with their peers; often they do not have sufficient opportunity for such networking in Africa, whereas opportunities abroad offer them the opportunity to share their work and advance their research careers more rapidly. Internationalisation strategies of African higher education institutions must create the opportunities for researchers and research students to more effectively engage their peers in the developed world without the need to leave their positions in Africa. Simultaneously, more networks are needed within the continent that will raise the critical mass of expertise in selected fields of study and in disciplines where Africa's political, social and geographic location can provide it a comparative advantage in global science. The more researchers become networked and have opportunities to meet, share, criticise and learn from other researchers within Africa and outside, the more opportunities they will have to advance their careers where they are.

Stellenbosch University and the University of Botswana have over the past five years developed a bilateral partnership that is aimed at this level of networking and exchange. Various collaborative programmes exist between the two institutions, often including multiple partners in other countries inside and outside Africa. One of the flagship collaborative programmes is the Partnership for Africa's Next Generation of Academics (PANGeA) initiative. It aims to create jointly supervised, world-class doctoral education with top African universities as the lead institutions in the design and implementation of the research themes to be studied. The themes carry a developmental focus with a multidisciplinary approach, and will bring researchers and doctoral students from across the continent and experts from abroad together in workshops, conferences and joint research projects. Simultaneously, African doctoral students (typically young lecturing staff in need of PhD qualifications) will receive expert methodological and research skills training during their first year of study from the recently established African Doctoral Academy (ADA). It will be explained how the various elements of the PANGeA network aims to address the challenge of capacity building in African academia through transnationalisation.