

Intellectual Flexibility, Innovative Partnerships and Collaborative Initiatives in Knowledge Production and Dissemination for the African University of the Twenty First Century

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This paper focuses on the need for African universities to consider intellectual flexibility, innovative partnerships and collaborative initiatives as pathways into sustained knowledge production and dissemination. The paper argues that universities are some, and not the only, players in the knowledge-intensive society now in vogue. Sites of knowledge production and dissemination are multiplying at the local, national, regional and global levels necessitating a reconsideration of existing theories, policies and practices with a view to realizing the best results in the circumstances. Unlike the current state where social sciences and the humanities have to consistently struggle for their presence and relevance in the African higher education system, this paper argues that development on the continent depends on both the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ sciences. Consequently, instead of suffocating the ‘soft’ sciences, this paper posits that intellectual flexibility; innovative partnerships and collaborative initiatives in knowledge production and dissemination should be acknowledged and identified as priority issues that require redress by the African University of the Twenty First Century. If African universities are to effectively execute their mandates, they have to respond innovatively to the challenges of a radically transforming society by seeking cross-disciplinary answers to development challenges beyond any one dominant and hegemonic narrative. The world over, the need for different intellectual communities to connect and seek solutions is becoming increasingly urgent. Increased collaboration and awareness of practical ways of achieving desired solutions are critical and inform deliberations by a variety of scholars whose arguments are situated at the confluence of science, technology, management and policy. This paper therefore argues that the twenty-first century is the age of collaboration. Flexibility, innovation, partnerships and collaboration are increasing and becoming important strategies being employed in all facets of life. The paper argues that the complexity and uncertainty of African societal change demands that the University adopts and adapts more inclusive and cross-boundary approaches that acknowledge the value of diverse perspectives in effectively responding to development challenges.