

Where Do Changes in Higher Education Management in Sub-Saharan Africa Come from? An Illuminative View of Public Sector Reforms

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The purpose of this paper is to present an illuminative view of the pertinence of public sector reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa and how they have redefined all the facets of higher education management. It is evident that the pace of change in universities has been unprecedented and it is also indisputable that higher education management in African universities has been regarded as weak and relatively inefficient. Yet at the same time there is little evidence to shed light on the forces of change in African universities and where they come from. But this is a prerequisite for tracing the trajectories of transformation that are critical for understanding the external environments of universities as well as the responses that institutional leadership and management makes. Clearly, most if not all of the responses that universities make depend on the strategic intentions of the leaders and managers and the increasingly unpredictable contexts. Indeed, as part of the environment, public sector reforms sanctioned by the World Bank have epitomized the transformations that African higher education systems and institutions have experienced since the beginning of the 1990s. In sub-Saharan Africa, noticeable reforms include changes in legislation, institutional autonomy, quality assurance, and private provision of higher education, etc. It has to be noted that these reforms have been neither homogeneous nor in equal measure across all countries. Moreover, prior to changes in higher education legislation that granted autonomy, state control of the universities in most of the African higher education systems had made institutional strategic planning less evident. Therefore, there is need to explore how higher education management has reorganized its internal managerial processes and structures, embraced cross-cutting functions like internationalisation, quality assurance in its academic provisions, and developed research management. The findings reported are based on selected public universities in sub-Saharan African countries.