



# CONCEPT PAPER

## For a Conference on THE ROLE OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Jointly organized by

**The Association of African Universities (AAU),  
African Union Commission (AUC), and  
St. Mary's University College (SMUC)**

**May 2012**



## A. INTRODUCTION

### ***The Association of African Universities***

1. The Association of African Universities (AAU) is an international non-governmental organisation set up in November 1967 by universities in Africa to promote cooperation among themselves and between them and the international academic community. It has a current membership of 270 institutions comprising universities and other higher education institutions drawn from all parts of the continent. Its headquarters is in Accra, Ghana, and it officially operates in three working languages, English, French and Arabic. The AAU has over the years become the major actor and coordinator of activities for African higher education, including the implementation of regional programmes in research, leadership development, ICT capacity building, academic staff exchange, student fellowships, management and dissemination of scholarly information, gender, HIV/AIDS and quality assurance.
2. The AAU, as the apex higher education body in Africa, possesses a unique capacity to convene higher education institutional leaders and policy-makers from all parts of the continent and on key issues related to African higher education and development. In addition, the Association provides leadership in the identification of emerging issues, and support for debating them and facilitating appropriate follow-up action by its members, partners and other stakeholders.

### ***African Union Commission***

3. The African Union (AU) is a union consisting of 54 African states. Established on 9 July 2002, the AU was formed as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The most important decisions of the AU are made by the Assembly of the African Union, a semi-annual meeting of the heads of state and government of its member states. The AU's secretariat is the African Union Commission (AUC), which is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Commission is the Secretariat of the Union entrusted with executive functions. The structure represents the Union and protects its interest under the auspices of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government as well as the Executive Committee. The AU Commission is made up of the



following portfolios: Peace and Security; Political Affairs; Trade and Industry; Infrastructure and Energy; Social Affairs; Rural Economy and Agriculture; Human Resources, Science and Technology; and Economic Affairs.

4. The mission of AUC is to become an efficient and value-adding institution driving the African integration and development process in close collaboration with African Union Member States, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and African citizens. The Commission is guided by the following principles: Subsidiarity and complementarity with other Organs, Member States and RECs; Results orientation, feasibility and impact focus; Close coordination and cooperation with the RECs; Coherence of policies and programmes; and A networking approach that takes advantage of available resources through other players.

### ***St. Mary's University College***

5. Founded in 1998, St. Mary's University College (SMUC) offers quality regular, extension and distance education with reasonable tuition and scholarships. Four academic faculties offering more than 10 degree and TVET programmes provide a wide array of choices to students in the fields of Accounting, Information Technology, Law, Management, Marketing, Secretarial Science and Office Management, and Languages, among others. It also offers various programmes in its College of Open and Distance Learning (CODL). In addition to running more than nine masters programmes in cooperation with Indira Gandhi National Open University, the University College currently offers a Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme and has finalized its preparation to open a graduate programme in Rural Development, Agri-Business, and Agricultural Economics.
6. St. Mary's University College established the Centre for Educational Improvement & Quality Assurance (CEIQA) in 2006 to address quality issues within the institution. It has also established a Research and Knowledge Management Office (RAKMO) and entrusted it with the responsibility of managing and coordinating all research and publication activities at the college.



7. St. Mary's University College, has since 2002 successfully sponsored and organised nine consecutive national conferences on Private Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia (PHEIs). These conferences have brought together a variety of stakeholders who have explored ways of improving the quality of higher education in Ethiopia, as well as promoted the culture of research, strengthened private-public partnership, and highlighted developments in the area of private higher education in the country. A total of 150 papers have been published since from the proceedings of the workshop series.

## **B. CONFERENCE RATIONALE**

8. This Conference is being organised as the 10<sup>th</sup> in the series of consecutive annual conferences on private higher education provision organised by SMUC to promote dialogue and better understanding of their roles in society. This year, SMUC is partnering with the AAU, which is the apex higher education body in Africa, to broaden the scope and theme beyond the Ethiopian experience, as had been in the past.

9. The immediate post-independent era in Africa saw higher education as a “public good” offering knowledge and social justice through fair access to knowledge resources, as well as offering a broad range of skills and capabilities through research to accelerate the continent’s development (Sawyer, 2004). The myriad of social and economic challenges that plagued Africa, beginning from the 1980s and the subsequent structural adjustment reforms undertaken by many African Governments led to the gross underfunding of higher education, which had hitherto been mainly supported from public funds. As demand for higher education expanded significantly on the continent as a whole, many African higher education institutions have responded by admitting greater numbers of students each year. The students’ population tripled from 2.7 million in 1991 to 9.3 million in 2006. A projection of the recent trends in individual countries suggests that the entire continent will have between 18 million and 20 million students by 2015 (World Bank, 2010).

10. Partly as a result of globalization, an increasing number of private universities have been established in Africa to, among others, absorb the spill-over from the pool of



fully qualified but unsuccessful applicants to the public institutions, and to offer a limited range of programmes which tend to be more market driven. From an estimated 7 private universities in 1960 to 27 in 1990, by 2006 this education service sub-sector had accounted for 22% of higher education students on the continent, a percentage close to levels observed in Europe (World Bank, 2010).

11. The contributions of private higher education institutions to the internationalization of higher education in Africa can be seen in the changing landscape of higher education provision. For example, in Uganda, there are currently seven public and 27 private universities, while all the 40 universities in Somalia are privately owned (WIKIPEDIA 2012). Ethiopia has 22 public universities and several private institutions, while South Africa has 21 public universities and 87 private universities (World Bank 2009). Ghana has six public and 42 private universities, while in Nigeria, there are 36 federal universities, 37 state universities, and 45 private universities (National Accreditation Board 2012; National Universities Commission 2012). The statistics clearly show that private providers contribute very significantly to higher education in Africa and by extension, to the internationalization of higher education in areas such as enhancing the international profile of the institution; strengthening research and knowledge production; and diversification of faculty and staff.
12. The proliferation of private higher education institutions in Africa has, *inter alia*, created some challenges that need to be addressed (see for example, Sawyerr 2004). These challenges include:
  - i. Shortage of resources, infrastructure, and funds;
  - ii. their over reliance on part-time faculty from the public institutions with implications both for the quality of delivery at the private universities and for effective performance in the public institutions;
  - iii. the concentration of for-profits private institutions on directly marketable courses and programmes, thereby out-competing the public institutions in respect of a category of high-paying courses and programmes that the latter could use to augment their income earning capacity; and





iv. the absence of research in private higher education as a necessary part of the higher education enterprise.

13. In national systems where the public universities are already weak and vulnerable, these negative features could have an exaggerated distortionary effect (Sawyer, 2004).

### C. CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

14. The conference seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- a. assess the impact of private higher education provision on the revitalization of higher education in Africa;
- b. determine pedagogical reforms that would contribute to the core functions of teaching, learning and research in private universities;
- c. explore areas for effective collaboration in research between public and private universities in Africa;
- d. review the impact of globalization on the 'true' values in higher education in Africa with particular emphasis on the 'commodification' of higher education as a tradable good under the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS); and
- e. make recommendations for the maintenance of the maximum social benefit to be derived from the pursuit of higher education.

### D. THEME AND SUBTHEMES

15. Against the background and its objectives, the Conference has chosen as theme "*The Role of Private Universities in Higher Education in Africa*". Six sub-themes have been developed from the general theme as follows:

- Private Higher Education Provision in Africa: Strategies for Success and Opportunities: With the proliferation of private university education in Africa, papers should address issues concerning this opportunity and how it can be exploited for the optimal benefits of Africans;
- Private Higher Education at the Crossroads: Strategic Planning and the Pursuit of the Public Good: As universities in Africa compete for relevance, papers



- should focus on how the curricula, programmes, researches and overall institutional planning meet the aspirations of society and the labour market;
- Funding of Private Universities in Africa: Papers should address various approaches to private university education provision in Africa and what lessons could be learnt from the successful institutions;
  - Public-Private Partnership in Higher Education in Africa: On one hand, papers should interrogate the extent to which private universities are mentored by their public ones and what lessons and challenges accrue therefrom. On the other hand, papers should address whether university education meets the aspirations of the productive sector and the need for increased involvement of industry in institutional curriculum development;
  - Private Universities in Community Service in Africa: Papers should examine to what extent private universities in Africa address their third mission of community engagement;
  - Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Private Universities in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities: Papers should address what private universities themselves are doing to assure quality in their respective institutions, as well as what gaps exist and strategies for improvement.

## E. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

16. Specifically, it is expected that the conference would produce the following:
- a. commissioned papers and policy briefs as advocacy tools on quality assurance and accreditation issues in private universities;
  - b. facilitate collaboration and the building of synergies between public and private universities in Africa;
  - c. contribute to strategic planning and pedagogical reforms towards the pursuit of the three core functions of teaching, learning and community service in private universities; and
  - d. provide an enhanced platform for networking amongst private universities in Africa.



## F. CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS AND PRESENTATIONS

17. Participants expected at the conference include vice-chancellors, rectors, presidents, and principals of public and private higher education institutions, as well as researchers, scholars, policy makers, development partners, and other higher education stakeholders.
18. A total of thirty-five (35) papers are expected to be presented, One major conference keynote, five at plenary sessions and the rest at parallel session. The Conference is expected to provide African and international scholars with an opportunity to present their research findings, scholarship and informed opinions on aspects that bridge the link between private higher education in Africa and their roles in society.

## G. VENUE AND DATE

19. The Conference is expected to hold on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of August 2012 at the newly built AUC facility in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
20. The venue has been chosen for its conference facilities, proximity to city centre and hotels, and access for transportation.





## H. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

S/No	Organisation in charge	Activity to be Executed
1	Association of African Universities (AAU)	Website Development & Publicity; Formal Invitations; Hosting of the First Planning Committee Meeting; Conference Secretariat Vetting of Conference Papers; Appreciation Plaques for Keynote Speakers; Registration Monitoring; Conference Evaluation; Publication of Conference Proceedings
2	African Union Commission (AUC)	Securing Conference Venue; Publicity; Opening Remarks; Funding; Local Reception of Participants & Conference Organisation; Provision of Arabic Translation; Name Tags; Conference Evaluation
3	St. Mary's University College (SMUC)	Funding; Publicity; Local Programme/Excursion; Letter to Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia (Overseas Missions); Facilitation of Visa Acquisition; Securing the Participation of the Minister of Education (Opening and Closing Ceremonies); Contact/Securing Hotel; Local Transport (Airport-Hotel-Airport Transfers, Hotel-Conference Venue-Hotel, Excursion); Conference Package; Conference Evaluation

## CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

A Conference Planning Committee (CPC), which will be responsible for the organisation, planning and execution of the conference, will be set up. Membership of the CPC will comprise two people each from AAU and SMUC, and one person each from Francophone Africa, Arabophone Africa, and the international development partners. The seven-member committee is expected to meet two times – one meeting in Accra and the other in Addis Ababa.



## J. BUDGET

21. The budget for the three-day conference is estimated at **US\$90,080** as per the breakdown below.

<b>CONFERENCE BUDGET Activity</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Amount (US\$)</b>
<b>Travels</b>		
• 1 Keynote Speaker @ US\$2,000 and 6 Plenary Speakers @ US\$1,500	7	11,000
• AAU @ US\$1,500 per person	5	7,500
• Conference Facilitators @ US\$1,500 per person	2	3,000
• Paper Presenters @ US\$500 per person	35	17,500
<b>Boarding</b>		
• Accommodation and feeding for 1 Keynote and 6 Plenary Speakers @ US\$480	7	3,360
• AAU @ US\$160 per day per person x 4 days	5	3,200
• Facilitators @ US\$160 per day per person x 4 days	2	1,280
<b>Honoraria</b>		
• Keynote (US\$1,000) and 6 Plenary Speakers @US\$500 each	7	4,000
• 1 Chief Conference Facilitator @ US\$1,500 and 1 Conference Facilitator@ US\$1,000	2	2,500
Conference Feeding Package: 2 Tea Breaks x 2 days & 3 Lunches @ US\$75 per person; 1 Dinner @ US\$15 per person; 1 Reception (including drinks) @ US15 per person	120	12,600
Conference bags, documentation, badges, CDs, memento @US\$25 each	120	3,000
Local Transportation & bus to and fro hotels and conference site for 3 days	1	2,000
Communication/Coordination and Protocol/Expendable Materials/Secretariat		1,000
Publicity (3 international journalists @ US\$1,500 per person and 3 local journalists @ US\$50 per person)	6	4,800
Conference website maintenance at AAU	1	750
Publication (in English and French) and Dissemination of Conference Proceedings	500	10,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>87,490</b>
Contingency	1	2,590
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90,080</b>