

Call for Papers

For a special issue of the scientific quarterly, *Afrique Contemporaine*


Higher Education in Africa: a time of change

A special issue edited by Ibrahim Chitou, Cédric Mayrargue and Olivier Provini

In the face of several challenges, higher education systems in Africa are experiencing profound change. Demand for higher education has risen sharply, driven by a recent and vast expansion of primary and secondary education. Academic institutions have drastically changed the higher-education landscape by introducing — at times with considerable fanfare — an unprecedented range of courses funded by public, private, local, international, religious and/or secular resources. By deploying reforms and controls, governments have renewed their commitment to this previously neglected sector, one frequently regarded with mistrust in the past — as evidenced by low budgets, outdated university infrastructure, insufficient and aging teachers, institutional management difficulties, and non-renewed curricula.

These changes, affecting students, administrators and faculty, fall within specific political, economic, and social contexts. We might also situate them temporally within the era of globalization and spatially within the standardizing and internationalizing practices of the higher-education system.

The transformations affecting higher education in Africa manifest in country-specific ways, according to singular logics and temporalities. Nonetheless, given increasing interest from international organizations and donors, as reflected in rising international aid volumes for education-related projects, these transformations align with global trends. For example, several large American foundations (the best-known including Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Ford Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation) have jointly created a fund to finance education reform across Africa, the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA, 2009). European nations



have also committed to bilateral cooperation projects, particularly to support African reforms based on the Bologna Process. However, less financial and political support has gone to reform higher education than primary and secondary schooling.

These trends propel the growing interest in research on post-secondary education reform. To date, the literature has primarily questioned the internationalization of university systems (Brock-Utne, 2003; Zeleza and Olukoshi, 2004; Musselin, 2008; Akkari and Payet, 2010; Lange and Henaff, 2015), the transnational circulation of models (Charlier, 2006; Charlier and Croché, 2010; Charlier and Croché, 2012; Leclerc-Olive et al., 2011), and the social consequences of reforms (Lebeau and Mobolaji, 2000; Hirtt, 2003; Mamdani, 2007; Bugwabari et al., 2012). This special edition of *Afrique Contemporaine* will shift the analysis toward the trajectories, configurations, and national and local roots of African higher education transformation, approached from several observation points: public policy creation, institutions arising from new educational offerings, strategies of administrator-managers, and everyday practices of teaching faculty and students.

Such analyses of contemporary higher education in Africa should first interrogate the changes that affect the sector and its actors, both old and new; they also call for thinking about the place of education and training in contemporary African societies. We have identified several approaches that offer both potential topics for discussion and heuristics for understanding changes, whether these affect the plurality, singularity, or historicity of the processes under study:

(1) Higher-education reform and its actors

Authors might first interrogate the making and implementing of reforms to meet the challenges now shaping the field of higher education. This line of questioning could include reforms regulating the creation of public or private academic institutions, the issue of their long-term economic viability, their implementation of new governance standards, or the restructuring of degree programmes and changes to curricula and training courses. Such analyses might emphasize actors who have participated in designing public policy or those affected by the reforms. While the literature extensively covers the influence of international actors in education-sector reforms, we believe it worthwhile to shift attention toward local and national stakeholders working in the education sector, such as


policymakers, ministerial counsellors, university authorities, administrative staff, faculty, students, graduates, and to a lesser extent regional or international actors – intergovernmental organizations, university networks, experts. We encourage attention to these actors throughout the entire process, from adding reforms to the agenda through decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of outcomes.

(2) The modalities, forms, features and effects of higher-education diversification

The expansion of higher-education offerings in Africa seems unprecedented: the choice of public institutions grows, with new universities, faculties and schools knitting territories together in new ways. We also see more private (sometimes regional) institutions, especially religious ones, and outposts of foreign (notably American and European) business, management, engineering and other professional schools. These new offerings, joined by the expansion of distance learning and the advent of specialized technical institutes, gradually build a competitive market for higher education and thus pose economic and political challenges. The modalities, forms and features of this diversification, like the models diffused, could constitute a line of inquiry and analysis: how might new education entrepreneurs contribute toward the restructuring of the entire field and, arguably, its commodification?

(3) Everyday administrating, teaching and studying

New forms of governance and management infuse institutions, sometimes in a context of continuing institutional impoverishment. Such controls affect students, faculty and administrative staff on a daily basis, particularly through the startling accession of New Public Management techniques and practices. The latter reorganize institutional administration and generalize processes and procedures to promote “good governance”. Largely unexamined in the literature on African higher education, these types of changes help redefine the sector’s mission as a whole, together with that of its institutions and actors. Authors may use localized and/or qualitative approaches to comprehend these transformations, following their trajectories as they affect student learning conditions or



faculty and staff work. More broadly, authors may question changes in the social status of students, graduates, faculty and/or administrators.

(4) Higher education and its environment

Discussion of higher education cannot be disconnected from the economic, social and political environment in which its actors operate. This environment helps us understand the specificities of local or national trajectories and their articulation with the sometimes-conflicting expectations of each society. For instance, do professionalizing considerations — orienting programmes toward careers and strengthening ties between universities and employment firms — articulate with funder expectations? Do such considerations reflect the goals and growing interest of private-sector donors who finance higher education, such as the American foundations or private enterprises? Similarly, do central governments and national education programmes — often impelled by development imperatives — set objectives for the sector, or do students and scholars actually create rather different priorities on the ground?

The editors offer these topics as points of departure for thinking about contemporary changes in African higher education and will study relevant proposals with great interest, whether case studies or comparative analyses. The editors invite coverage of any of Africa's various geographic or linguistic spaces, and encourage authors to draw upon the social sciences in any way that permits an original approach to the changes under study.

Submissions:

The editors seek both in-depth and shorter articles.

(1) In-depth articles must be 35,000 characters in length at time of publication, including spaces, footnotes and bibliography. Submissions must include an abstract of 800 total characters, key words, and a 150-character author(s) biography. In-depth articles can include maps, drawings, chronologies and/or photos.

(2) Shorter articles will feature in the *Repères* section that focuses on more-focused, empirical subjects, such as professional chronicles, participant observations, career progressions, and so forth. These shorter articles can also include maps, drawings, chronologies and/or photos.

Interested authors should submit an article proposal composed of a one-page précis, describing the topic, argument outline (in brief), and relevant sources, data and/or fieldwork.

Each article proposal will be blind peer-reviewed by two anonymous referees and by the *Afrique Contemporaine* editorial board.

Please submit your response to this call for papers via our online Editorial Manager: <http://www.editorialmanager.com/afriquecontemporaine/>

Only articles that successfully complete a blind peer-review by two anonymous referees and by the *Afrique Contemporaine* editorial board will be published.

For questions or clarification, please contact Isabelle Fortuit fortuiti@afd.fr, Ibrahim Chitou, ibchitou@yahoo.fr, Cédric Mayrargue c.mayrargue@gmail.com and/or Olivier Provini olivier_provini@yahoo.fr.

Timeline:

Submit article proposal by 1 November 2016

The editors will select article topics and notify authors by 30 November 2016

Selected authors must submit a first draft of their articles in April 2017


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