The Place of Private Higher Education in Regional Institutions in Africa: The Case of the OAU/AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development

by

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Abstract

Continental and sub-regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) play considerable, *albeit* symbolic, roles in promoting social development including access to education in their respective mandate areas. Most of these roles are facilitative or catalytic, often termed as advocacy, harmonization, coordination and monitoring and evaluation. These institutions provide platforms for policy dialogues, strategic deliberations and joint decision-making on common priority areas. They also facilitate the elaboration and adoption of regional common positions to serve as Africa's advocacy tools at global agenda-setting fora such as the Programs of Action of the 1994 UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the 2000 Dakar Commitment of Education for All (EFA).

To what extent does higher education in general and private higher education in particular feature in the policies, strategies, and programs of the AU and IGAD? Using descriptive, historical and comparative methods, this paper assesses the place of private higher education in the portfolios of these two supra-national organizations.

The major objectives of such a preliminary assessment is to appreciate efforts being made, identify gaps, if any, and suggest ways of strengthening or redirecting future interventions given the fact that the private sector education absorbs up to 25% of college intakes in Africa, provides access to those that have been left out by the public sector due to capacity limitations, and produces as well as employs a sizable proportion of the educated workforces in the continent. The concluding section of this paper outlines future areas of research and forwards some key recommendations on the need for informed policies and decisions on the promotion of private higher education in Africa with emphasis on quality, relevance, affordability and equitable access.

Key Words: private higher education, regional institutions, policies and strategies, priority areas

Introduction

In the early 1960s, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had been the principal continental body entrusted with the coordination and harmonization of continental initiatives. Its main areas of focus in those formative years were decolonization, political independence, nation-building, state sovereignty, and the fight against apartheid. However, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed the evolution of a number of sub-regional groupings such as ECOWAS (1975), AMU (1989), SADC (1992), IGAD (1996), ECCAS (1999), EAC (2000), and CEN-SAD (2000). Some of these 'supranational', sub-regional, multilateral and intergovernmental institutions have come to play increasing roles in defining common social development goals by, with, and for their member states.

The present study looks into the place of education, as one of the key social development agenda, in regional and sub-regional organizations with particular focus on the decisions, policies, strategies and programs adopted and implemented by the OAU/AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) since their establishment, in 1963/2000 and 1986/1996, respectively. The central argument advanced in this paper is that despite the importance of certain social development issues, such as education, in nation-building and socioeconomic transformation, institutions prioritize social development sectors largely based on their major *raison d'être* (reason for existence) and the latter changes through time. The reasons for institutions' existence are those fundamental objectives enshrined in their founding documents (charters, treaties, protocols, constitutive acts, agreements, etc.).

The subsequent sections examine these instruments to see whether or not education in general and private higher education in particular features prominently or marginally and why in the priority areas of the OAU/AU and IGAD.

Objectives of the Study

As the author alluded to above, education is a key component of knowledge/technology generation, preservation and transfer as well as building societal capacity to deal with wealth creation, adaptation, resilience, freedom from wants, and human security. Though education is a life-long process, higher education builds skills or competencies and provides access to enhanced job opportunities and broadens the choices of individuals as well as societies. Levine and Havighurst (1992:39) argue "… that education provides a channel not only to better socioeconomic status, but also to social mobility in the broader sense." Mobility, in contemporary discourse, refers to 'national transformation' suggesting accelerated change which is presumed to lead to accumulation of capital, investment and employment creation. In this regard, policies and strategies, whether they originate at national, regional or international level, provide a positive or constraining environment in the development of education or education for development.

The objectives pursued in this study are three-fold:

- to explore the *importance* attached to education as a critical engine for socio-economic transformation in the context of the OAU/AU and IGAD since the time of their respective establishment;
- to determine the *extent* to which *private higher education* has been treated in the policies, strategies and programs of these institutions; and
- to outline *future areas of intervention* to mainstream private higher education in continental and regional initiatives.

Methods and Data

The methodology used in this paper is a simple descriptive and historical approach. It is more of qualitative and interpretative than quantitative assessment. Therefore, most of the data are derived from the various documents (declarations, decisions, policies, strategies, special initiatives, and plans of action). The analysis follows a narrative and textual interpretation. In most cases a chronological order of events is used during which major decisions or initiatives have been launched. The time span for the data covers from 1963, the year in which the OAU was launched and 2015. The latter is witnessing an ongoing preparation of a new Continental Education Strategy for Africa for the period 2016 to 2025. Though the draft document does not bear the title, this seems to imply the Third Decade of Education in Africa. The document is consulted for the purpose of this paper to see if there is a shift in emphasis on private higher education in Africa.

Importance Attached to Education within the OAU/AU and IGAD

As noted in the introduction section, the OAU/AU's work on education, though with varying emphasis through the different stages of its development, is rooted in its key founding documents: the Charter of the OAU adopted in 1963 and the Constitutive Act of the AU adopted in 2000. The OAU Charter mandated the then newly established continental Organization to enhance, among others, "Educational and cultural cooperation" (Article II, 2 (c). To this effect, the Charter also envisioned the creation of Specialized Commissions for different sectors, one of which was the "Educational, Scientific, Cultural and Health Commission" (Article XX, 2). Similarly, the Constitutive Act of the African Union mandates the Executive Council (Composed of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Member States) to coordinate, among others, "education, culture, health and human development" as well as "science and technology" (Article 13, 1 (h) and (i)). In a manner similar to the OAU Charter, the Constitutive Act of the AU also provides for the establishment of Specialized Technical Committees one of which is the "Committee on Education, Culture and Human Resources" (Article 14, 1 (g)).

Therefore, various policies, strategies and programs of action of the OUA/AU emanate from such mandates bestowed up on the different policy organs of the Organization, including the Secretariat and Africa's development partners in the field of education, notably the UNESCO. The latter is regularly called upon to provide support for the practical implementation of regional policies and strategies in relevant sectors of its own mandates.

In retrospect, it is important to note that the first Summit Conference of Independent African States, held in May 1963 in Addis Ababa, urged member states to strengthen cooperation in education and culture as a means of breaking linguistic barriers and promoting understanding among peoples in the continent. This shows that quite early on, greater importance was attached to education as catalyst for the final goal of achieving African Unity. Moreover, education was seen as one of the weapons for African independence and decolonization. As part of this overarching objective, the 1963 first Summit Conference of Independent African States decided "… to receive on the territories of independent African States, nationalists from liberation movements in order to give them training in all sectors and afford young people all the assistance they need for their education and vocational training" (OAU, 1963).

In addition to their emphasis on the promotion of education in its broader sense, the founding leaders of the OUA recommended the establishment of an institute of African Studies to be a department of the African University proposed by Ethiopia (OAU, 1963) [emphasis added]. As we shall see later, the actual implementation of this particular recommendation on promoting higher education took nearly half a century, but surely this decision reflects the leaders' realization of the importance of higher education for Africa's development. It was also a precursor to what has now become the Pan-African University (PAU), a conglomeration of higher institutions of learning located in five regional centers of the continent: Algeria (North Africa), Nigeria (West Africa), Cameroon (Central Africa), Kenya (East Africa) and South Africa (Southern Africa).

A decade later, in 1973, the tenth Ordinary Session of the OAU Heads of State and Government, called for the "… adaptation of educational programmes to African realities and … the promotion of an African system of technical cooperation particularly, in education" (OAU, 1973). The importance of this decision should be seen in the backdrop of challenges related to the inapplicability of colonial education for emerging post-colonial African contexts, particularly in relation to the burgeoning task of nation-building and re-making of African history. Here, too, reference is made to education in its entirety. However, the desire to 'adapt education to African realities' implies the need for building skills and competences that are needed to fill the gap in the new administrations of independent African States thereby amplifying the importance attached to skills-based education within the OAU countries.

Consistent with the relevant provisions of the OAU Charter, Article 25 (1(g)) of the 1991 Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community provided that a Committee on Education, Culture and Human Resources be established to advise and provide leadership in the elaboration, adoption and implementation of continental and sub-regional policies relevant to the development of these sectors.

With particular reference to Science and Technology (which have much to do with higher education institutions), Article 51 of the Treaty urged member states to:

(a) Strengthen scientific and technological capabilities in order to bring about the socio-economic transformation required to improve the quality of life of their population, particularly that of the rural populations;
(b) Ensure the proper application of science and technology to the development of agriculture, transport and communications, industry, health and hygiene, energy, education and manpower and the conservation of the environment;
(c) Reduce their dependence [external sources knowledge and technology] and promote their individual and collective technological self-reliance;
(d) Cooperate in the development, acquisition and dissemination of appropriate technologies; and
(e) Strengthen existing scientific research institutions and, where they do not exist, establish new institutions [all emphasis added].

Dwelling further on cooperation among member states in the areas of "Education and Training", Article 68 (2) of the Abuja Treaty further calls upon Member States to:

(a) Improve the efficiency of existing educational systems by promoting the training of trainers and using appropriate methods and aids;
(b) Cooperate in the strengthening of existing regional and community training institutions and, where necessary, establish new institutions, preferably through the strengthening of appropriate existing national and regional institutions;
(c) Prepare, coordinate and harmonize joint training programmes with a view to adapting them to development needs thereby ensuring progressively self-sufficiency in skilled personnel;
(d) Promote the systematic exchange of experience and information on education policy and planning; and
(e) Take appropriate measures to stop the brain- drain from the community and encourage the return of qualified professionals and skilled manpower to their countries of origin.

In light of the foregoing it can be stated that the Abuja Treaty has given greater emphasis on education, particularly higher and technical education in an effort to anchor the continent's development agenda on solid foundations of scientific knowledge. However, the decade in which the Treaty was adopted was not favorable for the implementation of the various commitments on the social development sectors and institutional architectures suggested by the Abuja Treaty. One of the major factors for this was the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) engineered by international financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank which often discouraged investment in the social sector, particularly in education and health (see Reimers, 1997).

The other factor had to do with African countries' emphasis, from the mid-1970s to the 1990s, on an ineffective concept of self-reliance as part of their drive to reduce external dependence thereby compromising investment in social development programs not excluding education.

In 1992, the OAU Heads of State and Government adopted "Resolution on Strengthening the Role of African Higher Educational Institutions and Universities in the Development of Africa" (OAU, 1992). This was one of the notable achievements by the OAU and UNESCO in putting higher education top on the continental agenda. It was a direct expression of concern and commitment to promoting higher education both as a tool for development and a subject of development in its own right. More specifically, the Resolution, urges Member States:

> a) to continue their reconsideration of the policies, objectives, functions and practices of African Higher Educational Institutions and Universities bearing in mind the need to revitalize these institutions and render them more efficient and better adopted to the requirements of African societies [sic];
>
> b) to find ways and means of assisting African Higher Educational Institutions in accomplishing their task and in discharging their duties, through the use of more adapted structures and the application of management methods which will facilitate the introduction of efficient innovations;
>
> c) to support the development of training and management in African Higher Educational Institutions and Universities and leave them open to various sectors of the society, particularly through the establishment of close links between them and industry, agriculture and generally the productive sectors;
>
> d) promote the strengthening of cooperation among African Higher Educational Institutions and Universities at sub-regional and regional levels; (OAU, 1992).

Perhaps as a follow-up to this and other decisions including the Abuja Treaty, the OAU launched, in 1996, the First Decade of Education (1997-2006)[emphasis added]with a focus on (a) equity and access to basic education; (b) the quality, relevance and effectiveness of education; (c) complementary learning modalities; and (d) capacity building (Pityana, 2008). However, final assessment of this Decade indicated that attainment of these goals was not satisfactory. In this connection, the Conference of African Ministers of Education in 2006 identified several reasons for the inadequate progress made during the First Decade, including absence of a concrete plan of action … after its formal launch; lack of ownership among the various stakeholders; low publicity; absence of support from Africa´s development partners; and low level of domestication or integration of the goals of the Decade into national education sector development programs (AU, 2006). Another major factor for the poor performance of the First Decade of Education for Africa is the conspicuous absence of emphasis on higher education.

With regard to the issue of private higher education during this period not much was done since the concept as well as the practice of private higher education was just beginning emerge in Africa but did not enjoy a critical mass of policy or decision making audience at both continental and sub-regional levels. With all the limitations, the first Decade was replaced by the Second Decade to address the unfinished business of education in the preceding ten years.

The Second Decade of Education (2006-2015) adopted by the African Union Heads of State and Government shifted emphasis by articulating the need for higher education in general and the provision of specialized technical training under the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs. In fact, the overarching goal of this Decade was to "Complete revitalisation of higher education in Africa, with the emergence of strong and vibrant institutions profoundly engaged in fundamental and development-oriented research, teaching, community outreach and enrichment services to the lower levels of education; and functioning in an environment of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, within an overall framework of public accountability" (AU, 2006). In particular, by implementing the TVET programs of the Decade, the AU, RECs, and their development partners committed "To ensure that education systems in Member States are better able to provide the young generation with quality education that imparts key generic competencies, skills and attitudes that lead to a culture of lifelong learning and entrepreneurship in order to fit them into an ever-changing world of work" (AU, 2006).

The major points of departure of the Second Decade of Education for Africa from that of the First include (a) comprehensive plan of action adopted by the higher decision-making organs of the AU (African Ministers of Education), endorsed by the AU Heads of State and Government; (b) enhanced ownership of member states; (c) clearly articulated role of RECs; (d) continuous advocacy and publicity in major regional and international fora; (e) growing interest among partners to support the development of higher education as well as TVET in Africa; and (f) encouraging, if not adequate, monitoring and evaluation of continental efforts. The establishment of NEPAD, the transformation of the OUA into the AU with the creation of commissions and departments tasked with clear mandates to deal with education as with other sectors of social development, and the adoption of continental policies and strategies in these sectors under the AU Vision, Mission and Strategies since 2004 have all contributed to the mainstreaming of education in Africa. Moreover, the commitment of the international community through such initiatives as the ICPD and MDGs, has contributed significantly to the remarkable achievement of the OAU/AU in promoting higher education and technical know-how in Africa.
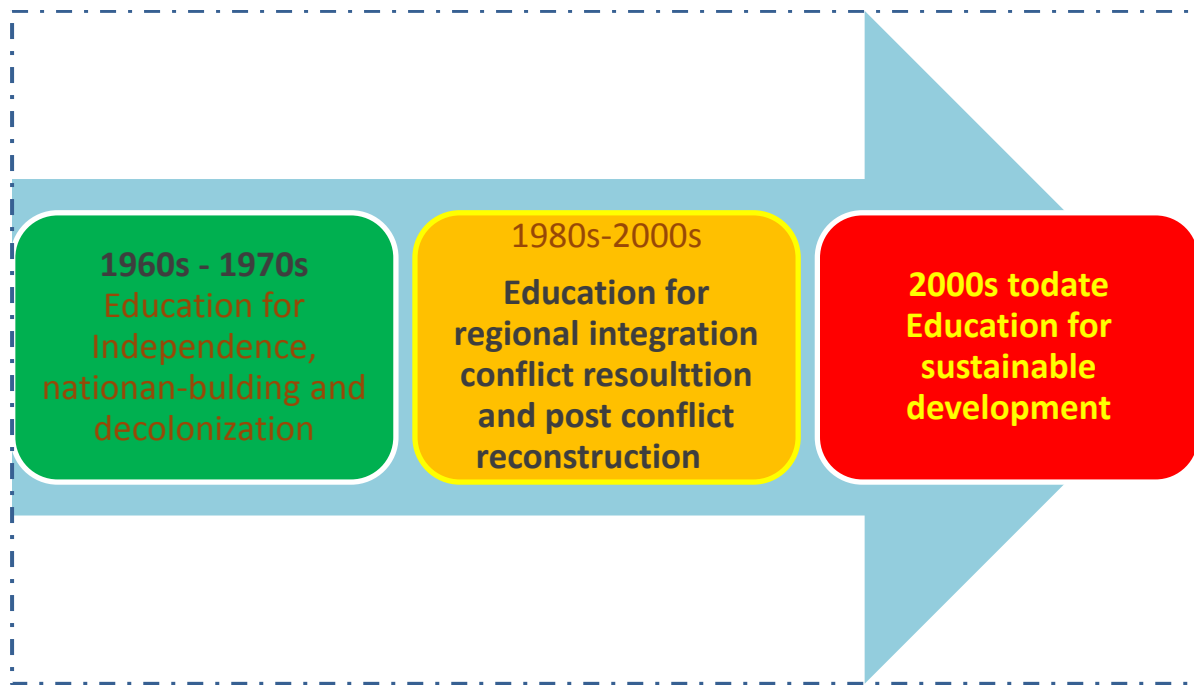
Fig 1: The evolution of the goal of education in Africa since independence

Agenda 2063, adopted in connection with the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the OAU/AU, has also given considerable space for higher education in the context of its ambitious roadmap for Africa's developments in the next 50 years. While the first 30 years are characterized by the struggle for independence and decolonization, with greater emphasis on nation-building, identity formation and territorial integrity, the next 20 years ushered in a new era of transformation in which the OAU was replaced by the AU. The latter was given broader mandates encompassing regional integration, enhanced cooperation, and socioeconomic development including education, science and technology. In this regard, paragraph 67 (b) of Agenda 63 called upon member states and Africa's development partners to "Catalysea Education [sic] and Skills revolution and actively promote science, technology, research and innovation, to build knowledge, human resources, capabilities and skills for the African century". It further stressed on the need to "Strengthen the Pan African University, build the Pan African Virtual University, and elevate Africa's role in global research, technology development and transfer, innovation and knowledge production" (AU, 2014).

The fore-going discussion shows that there has been a considerable evolution in the OAU/AU's policies, strategies, and initiatives on education over the past five decades. As the diagram above illustrates, three major phases or trends could be observed in the policies and strategies of the OAU/AU pertaining to education. The first phase refers to the period from the early 1960s to the 1980s. As pointed out earlier, this period emphasizes on education as a tool for Africa's independence, decolonization and state-building.

This has been evidenced in the periodic decisions of African leaders to provide educational opportunities for citizens of countries struggling for independence, to promote educational cooperation among member states in a bid to remove linguistic barriers and to build indigenous capacities to manage the affairs of the newly independent countries of Africa.

The second phase, 1980s to 2000s, witnesses the emergence of regional groupings aimed at strengthening cross-border and interstate collaboration, between and among countries. This period also saw pervasive internal and cross-border conflicts as well as the settlement of most of these conflicts towards the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s. During this period, the major purpose of education was to serve as a catalyst for consolidation of regional integration, conflict resolution, post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building. The third phase, roughly from the early 2000s to the present, is largely a period of transition, for example, from the OAU to the AU, characterized by greater emphasis on forging common African values, with considerable emphasis on "people-centered" (AU, 2004) socioeconomic development in the continent. The role assigned to education in general and higher education in particular has been that of facilitating the attainment of the sustainable development programs of the continent. The adoption of the fifty-year development Agenda 63 is a clear testimony of this continued desire for building a knowledge-driven socioeconomic transformation through education.

The Experience of IGAD in Promoting Education

The Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) was established in 1986 by six countries, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda to coordinate regional responses to the devastating drought and famine that plagued the Eastern and Horn of African countries from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s. Accordingly, its major priorities were mobilization of relief and rehabilitation assistance, tackling the effects of drought and natural as well as man-made disasters, and encouraging member countries and the international community to develop short, medium and long-term strategies to ensure food security and emergency preparedness. Therefore, broader social development issues such as education were not part of its priority objectives though the Organization was trying to resolve conflicts in the region.

In 1996, the Organization was revitalized and renamed as Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and in the early 2000s it was recognized as one of the eight (8) Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the AU. The new IGAD was given expanded mandates to serve as a vehicle for security, regional integration and social development including culture and education (IGAD/HESAD, 2013). The social development component of IGAD covers a wide-range of sectors such as health, including HIV/AIDS, population and development, culture, education, human resources development, labour migration, and employment, social protection, and gender, all lumped together in the Health and Social Development (HESAD) program. Though a considerable amount of work has been done and noteworthy progress achieved in the health sector particularly in the fight against HIV/AIDS (IGAD, 2014) through high-level international cooperation involving the World Bank and other bilateral and multilateral agencies, it so happened that *culture and education*still remain largely obscured in the IGAD programs (Kebede, 2015)**.**

Therefore, while it is possible to trace the relatively long history of education policies, strategies and programs or initiatives within the OAU/AU, there is no comparable evidence of similar magnitude by IGAD despite the fact that "IGAD has as its educational mission to facilitate, promote and strengthen cooperation in research development and application in science and technology" (ADEA/AU, 2014). The ADEA observes the absence of capacity within IGAD to deal with education including providing comprehensive and up to date statistical data for the AU and other international organizations. The ADEA strongly stated that "Persistent significant data blanks suggest that the IGAD region may not yet have the capacity to regularly and compre-hensively provide education statistics … particularly in the priority areas of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and Higher and Tertiary Education" (ADEA/AU, 2014).

Therefore, the available evidence suggests that despite its commitment to the promotion of social development in the region, IGAD's focus so far has tilted to peace and security, health and now, drought resilience. In fact, and as argued in the introduction, the low priority attached to education in the IGAD programs emanates from limited human as well as financial capacity. It also results from the lack of articulation on education, culture and tourism in the founding document of IGAD. The only reference to *education* in the Agreement establishing IGAD is found under Article 13 (A, (e)) where it urges member states to, among others, "promote environmental education and training" because this was the major priority for a region constantly plagued by worsening climate change and related disasters. Indirectly, however, the Agreement establishing IGAD encourages member states to "Facilitate, promote and strengthen cooperation in research, development and application in the fields of science and technology" (Article 7, j) [emphasis added] (IGAD, 1996). Given the fact that science and technology are dealt with in higher education institutions, this provision could be seen as a legitimate entry for IGAD to coordinate cross-border collaboration between the countries. This could also be used as a guiding framework for the elaboration of further policies and strategies as well as plans of action until such time that the Agreement is expanded to give adequate space for education and other social development sectors.

One major initiative of IGAD in the areas of higher education began in September 2012 when IGAD, in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB), convened in Djibouti, "A multi-stakeholder consultation on the African Development Bank's first Human Capital Development Strategy ... to gather inputs and suggestions aimed at strengthening the AfDB's work in human development in Africa" (IGAD, Sept 2012). This was followed, in July 2013, by two consultative meetings, in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, and Djibouti, organized by the IGAD Secretariat "... so as to agree on the establishment of a consortium" of IGAD Universities (IGAD, July 2013). IGAD reported that "After careful and fruitful presentations and discussions about the best ways and means to have a consortium of IGAD Universities, the delegates agreed on the dire need for such a consortium that would enable knowledge, staff and students exchange programs in view of better competitiveness in the international arena" (IGAD, July 2013).

The discussion so far has revolved around the importance or values attached to education in the policies, strategies and programs of the OAU/AU and IGAD. As we have seen above, the subject of education has received varying degrees of treatments and emphases.

While the OAU/AU has given a relatively broader space for the role of education in the development of the continent, the same emphasis is conspicuously absent from the policies, strategies and programs of IGAD. The remaining question, however, is to what extent has private higher education featured or not featured in both the OAU/AU and IGAD programs. Though the answer to this question seems obvious, the next section will explore the issue further.

Private Higher Education in the Policies, Strategies and Programs of the OUA/AU and IGAD

The process of liberalization that began in the early 1990s in Africa also saw a transition from predominantly public sector education to the expansion of the private sector. Varghese (2004) identified a number of factors for the rapid expansion of private higher education during this period such as the inability of the public sector to satisfy the growing social demand for higher education; the changing political view of large scale public subsidies to the social presumed to affect investment in the 'productive sector'; growing demand for university courses that has resulted in limited absorption capacity of the public institutions of higher learning; the perceived or actual inefficiency of the public sector as compared to the private sector; and the shift from planned economy to liberal economic policies.

Despite the rapid growth of private higher education in Africa, it has received insignificant attention in the policies, strategies and programs of regional institutions. In recent years, however, this situation seems to be changing. For example, the AU Conference of African Ministers of Education (COMEDAF) in 2011 understood the dual source of higher education. The Preamble to the Regional Convention adopted by the 1st extraordinary session of COMEDAF, on the recognition of studies, certificates, diplomas, degrees and other academic qualifications in higher education in African stated that "… higher education is a public service provided by government or private sector institutions, whose organization and operation attach great importance to the principles of academic freedom and autonomy of higher education and research institutions, and aware of the need to uphold and protect these principles". The Convention made reference to cross-border higher education and defines the latter as "… education by *public/private* [emphasis added] and not-for-profit/for-profit providers. It encompasses a wide range of modalities, in a continuum from face-to-face … to distance learning ..." (AU, 2011).

This recognition of the dual nature of higher education with clear articulation of the private sector is a positive development because it has rarely been seen in earlier times. Even the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, while outlining a number of steps to be taken towards promoting education in Africa, is silent about private education leave alone private higher education. This is largely because the designation *private* education has been very much unknown in Africa prior to the mid-1990s. The only reference to the term 'private' in the Abuja Treaty is found under Article 63 (4) in relation to the "establishment of private companies for post and telecommunications" (OAU, 1991).

A noticeable shift in emphasis on the importance of the private sector in general and private education in particular, if not so much on private higher education, has increased in the 2000s. As mentioned elsewhere, the Second Decade for Education in Africa as well as its operational plan encouraged the involvement of a wide-range of actors including Regional Economic Communities (RECs), member states, NGOs, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector. With regard to the latter, the Second Decade calls for a strong public private partnership (PPP) though the specific ways in which this partnership materializes are not clearly elaborated. In particular, the Decade document has given increased roles assigned to Regional Economic Communities (RECs) which are regarded as the building blocks or pillars of the AU. Accordingly, RECs are expected to domesticate or adapt continental policies, strategies and plans of action, education included, to fit their specific regional contexts. They are also mandated to engage in advocacy, harmonization and coordination of the implementation of such instruments by their respective member states. At the same time, they would monitor and track progresses of commonly agreed regional and international programs of action such as those of the ICPD and MDGs at sub-regional and national levels.

However, despite such expectations, not all RECs would implement all the decisions of African Heads of State and Government with equal commitment. Nor do they give explicit emphasis on all sectors of the economy and social development. For example, as pointed out in section 4.2 above, education, in general, and private higher education, in particular, does not feature prominently in the key policy documents of IGAD. A closer look into the Agreement establishing IGAD reveals that the issue of education is completely missing in this very constitutive document. The only reference to the word 'education' appears in connection with regional cooperation on environment and natural resources. Article 13 (f) of the Agreement states that IGAD leaders expressed commitment to "… promote environmental *education* and training" [*italics* added]. The main reason for this under-emphasis on education, at least, as far as IGAD is concerned, rests in the nature of the organization which originally (in the mid-1980s) came into being to respond to drought and famine. Even after it was reconstituted as a development-oriented institution, IGAD had to preoccupy itself with conflict resolution and peace-building given the fact that the region happens to be one of the conflict-ridden areas in Africa. By contrast, the East African Community (EAC) has done a considerable work in creating a network of universities and harmonizing their activities with the view to enhancing educational quality and standardization of curricula, in the partner countries, two of which (Kenya and Uganda) happen to be members of IGAD. An example of EAC's emphasis on higher education in general and private higher education in particular can be seen from how the Executive Committee of the Governing Board of the Inter-Universities Council of the EAC is organized. The Protocol establishing the Inter-Universities Council provided for the setting up of a Committee composed of (a) three permanent secretaries of the ministries responsible for higher education in the partner states'; (b) three Vice Chancellors of public universities in the partner states; (c) three vice chancellors of private universities in the partner states [emphasis added]; and the executive secretary (EAC, 2002). This inclusion of private higher education institution has not happened even within the structures of the African Union; and EAC's experience in providing space for the private players could be one of the best examples which can be emulated by other regional bodies including the 'parent' Organization, the AU.

In recent months, the AU has continued to expand its understanding of the role of private higher education. The Draft Continental Education Strategy (CES) of the AU which is being reviewed by experts from member states, the RECs and the AU Commission, has given ample space for the *'private sector'* education. The draft strategy openly and clearly underlines that "The private sector should be encouraged to engage and contribute to the implementation of the CES by (a) adopting practices that support development of local entrepreneurship and job creation for the youth; (b) encouraging business environment to enhance increased private investment in education and training; and (c) mobilizing the private sectors in executing corporate social responsibility to support the CES programs" (AU, June 2015).

This is a major departure from earlier instruments adopted by the OUA/AU and is timely as it has come at the end of the Second Decade of Education for Africa, the Programs of Action of the ICPD and MDGs. It also coincides with the ongoing global dialogue on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda including the international communities' commitment on financing for development.

With respect to IGAD, the education sector in general, and private higher education in particular, has not received enough attention and there is a long way to go to bring both public and private higher education services into the policies, strategies and programs of the sub-regional entity.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Areas of Intervention in Private Higher Education

As indicated elsewhere, private sector education in general and private higher education in particular provide access to education for a growing body of young people in the continent. Available evidences suggest that as high as 25% of the school enrolment in Africa is attributed to private sector providers. Though far from accurate due to poor educational information management system (EMIS) in many of the African countries, this percentage is considerable. Given the fact that Africa has some of the fastest growing economies over the last few years, the future of human resources development in the content will definitely be tied to the private sector which will assume increased responsibilities in education, training and skills building.

In this regard, regional organizations entrusted with the mandate to coordinate, harmonize and facilitate cross-border collaboration should enlarge the place of private higher education in Africa. In order to do this, the AU and IGAD need to assess the contribution of private higher education in national development, regional integration and socio-cultural renaissance in the continent.

It is therefore essential to take a series of action points into consideration with respect to private higher education both by the AU and IGAD.

- First, it is imperative to assess the scope and coverage of private higher education at continental and sub-regional levels;

- Second, it is equally important to determine the role of private higher education sector in national and regional development through the production of highly needed human resources for growth and transformation;

- Third, efforts are needed to map-out the opportunities available for and challenges faced by the sector. In particular, studies on the quality, relevance, access and equity dimensions of private higher education are very critical. Both AU and IGAD should pay particular attention to these aspects in order to address them in a timely and cost-effective manner.

- Fourth, both AU and IGAD should create the necessary institutional architecture to facilitate the development of private higher education in their respective domains. In particular the continental umbrella Organization, the AU, should establish a unit or a section within the Human Resources, Science and Technology Commission, to coordinate, harmonize, monitor and evaluate efforts related to private higher education in Africa;

- Fifth, the Pan African University (PAU), which, as stated elsewhere, is comprised of a network of universities to provide courses in selected disciplines in each of the five regions of the AU, should involve private higher education institutions in its teaching, research and knowledge sharing practices. The AU should ensure that PAU does not appear an assemblage of public institutions of higher learning alone. It should expand its identification of centers of excellence in the private education sphere as much as in the public sector.

- Sixth, the AU, IGAD and their respective development partners need to create regular consultative fora for exchange of best practices and lessons learnt. This will help chart the way forward in enhancing the role of private higher education in sustainable socioeconomic development – one that puts equity, quality, appropriateness and employment creation at its center;

- Seventh, the international community should provide financial and technical support, as part of their commitment to the financing of sustainable development in Africa, to the AU and IGAD, on the one hand, and to the private higher education institutions, on the other, to build respective capacities and enhance the quality, accessibility, affordability and relevance of private higher education in Africa;

In this connection, the AU and IGAD should consider and endorse the Addis Ababa Declaration on the Role of Private Universities in Higher Education in Africa proposed by the International Conference on Private Higher Education in Africa, co-organized by the then St. Mary University College, now St. Mary's University, the African Union and the Association of African Universities (AAU) in August 2012.

In conclusion, this study revealed that the attention given to higher education in general and private higher education in particular in the policies, strategies and programs of the OAU/AU as well as IGAD happens to be uneven at best and scanty at worst. However, the study should be regarded as a preliminary exercise which should lead to further and detailed studies in subsequent years with the view to generating evidence for informed policy and decision-making in sub-regional, continental and international organizations. In this regard, it is hoped that the AU, IGAD and UNESCO will take the issue seriously and facilitate continuous research on the place of private higher education in Africa.

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