DIASPORA LINKAGES AND THE CHALLENGE OF STRENGHTHENING THE ACADEMIC CORE IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Gerald W. Ouma, PhD

University of the Western Cape

Going Global 4 – 6 March 2013, Dubai

Key questions

- What are the patterns and practices of engagement between African universities/academics with African diaspora academics?
- Do these engagements contribute to strengthening the academic core of African universities?

Empirical sites – North America and South African Universities

Background

- Brain drain and skills scarcity at African universities.
- Failure of policies and initiatives to encourage return of skilled emigrants.
- Possibility of skilled diaspora contributing to development back ‘home’ without permanently returning

Africans in the diaspora

- North America -- 39.16 million
- Latin America -- 112.65 million
- Caribbean -- 13.56 million
- Europe -- 3.51 million (World Bank, 2012).
- 23,000 qualified academics were emigrating from Africa each year (Chacha 2007)
- Approximately 65,000 African-born physicians and 70,000 African-born professional nurses working overseas in developed countries by 2000 (Shinn 2008).
- About 30,000 Africans with PhDs in the diaspora (Onsando 2007, Shinn 2008) .

Regional Distribution of South African Diaspora, 2007

Region	number	Percent
NORTH		
Europe	243,716	40.0
North America	108,221	18.0
Australasia	105,721	18.0
Sub-total	457,658	76.0
SOUTH		
Africa	302,764	20.0
Asia	14,042	2.0
Middle East	9,500	1.5
Latin America	2,305	0.5
Sub-total	328,613	24.0
TOTAL	786,721	

Source: Crush, J (2011)

Academic core in African Universities

- The nature, strength, size and continuity of a university's academic core/heartland is critical for its primary function as a knowledge institution.
- Academic core: teaching, research and training the next generation of academics
- Many universities in Africa have a weak academic core characterised by, inter alia:
  - limited output of master's and doctoral graduates
  - Limited research
  - Fewer academic staff with doctorates

Some indicators of the strength of the academic core of South African Universities

- Shape of student enrolments
- Permanent academic staff with doctorates
- High level knowledge outputs

Shape of student enrolment in SA Universities

	ANNUAL AVERAGES FOR 2008-2010						
	U/grad diplomas	U/grad degrees	Total u/grad	Postgrad below masters	Masters	Doctors	Total postgrad
UNIVERSITIES							
Stellenbosch	0%	63%	**63%**	14%	19%	4%	**37%**
Pretoria	14%	53%	**67%**	20%	10%	3%	**33%**
Witwatersrand	5%	63%	**69%**	9%	19%	4%	**31%**
Cape Town	3%	68%	**71%**	10%	14%	5%	**29%**
Free State	11%	63%	**73%**	16%	8%	2%	**27%**
Rhodes	4%	71%	**75%**	10%	11%	4%	**25%**
North West	36%	40%	**76%**	18%	5%	2%	**24%**
KwaZulu-Natal	12%	67%	**79%**	8%	10%	3%	**21%**
Western Cape	6%	74%	**79%**	9%	9%	3%	**21%**
Limpopo	5%	77%	**83%**	7%	10%	1%	**17%**
Fort Hare	5%	79%	**84%**	7%	6%	2%	**16%**
COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITIES							
Johannesburg	39%	47%	**87%**	9%	4%	1%	**13%**
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan	45%	42%	**87%**	6%	6%	2%	**13%**
Unisa	28%	61%	**89%**	9%	2%	0%	**11%**
Zululand	18%	71%	**89%**	7%	3%	1%	**11%**
Venda	4%	87%	**91%**	4%	4%	1%	**9%**
Walter Sisulu	58%	39%	**96%**	2%	1%	0%	**4%**
UNIVERSITIES OF TECHNOLOGY							
Cape Peninsula	69%	25%	**94%**	3%	2%	0%	**6%**
Central	71%	24%	**95%**	2%	2%	0%	**5%**
Tshwane	78%	18%	**97%**	1%	2%	0%	**3%**
Durban	79%	19%	**98%**	0%	1%	0%	**2%**
Vaal	87%	12%	**99%**	0%	1%	0%	**1%**
Mangosuthu	87%	12%	**99%**	0%	1%	0%	**1%**

Source: Centre for Higher Education transformation (CHET)

Permanent academic staff with doctorates (2008-2010)

	ANNUAL AVERAGES FOR 2008-2010				
	Total staff with doctorates	Professors with doctorates	Assoc. professors with doctorates	Senior lecturers with doctorates	Lecturers & below with doctorates
UNIVERSITIES					
Cape Town	59%	83%	**73%**	61%	31%
Stellenbosch	55%	89%	**83%**	62%	25%
Rhodes	53%	94%	**72%**	50%	27%
Witwatersrand	52%	88%	**78%**	59%	23%
Western Cape	48%	90%		47%	14%
North West	47%	95%	**90%**	58%	9%
Pretoria	37%	86%	**74%**	39%	8%
Free State	45%	94%	**84%**	53%	17%
Fort Hare	38%	74%	**55%**	47%	14%
KwaZulu-Natal	36%	80%	**70%**	51%	14%
Limpopo	20%	61%	**72%**	24%	3%
COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITIES					
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan	36%	91%	**58%**	45%	12%
Unisa	34%	72%	**68%**	29%	6%
Venda	34%	99%	**87%**	58%	8%
Zululand	34%	97%	**93%**	53%	14%
Johannesburg	24%	71%	**53%**	21%	6%
Walter Sisulu	10%	68%	**86%**	25%	3%
UNIVERSITIES OF TECHNOLOGY					
Central	26%	100%	**94%**	59%	7%
Vaal	15%	81%	**59%**	25%	2%
Tshwane	17%	94%	**46%**	23%	3%
Cape Peninsula	12%	92%	**39%**	19%	5%
Durban	10%	35%	**42%**	16%	2%
Mangosuthu	5%	0%	**8%**	12%	4%

Source: Centre for Higher Education transformation (CHET)

High-level knowledge outputs of permanents academics

	Annual averages for 2008-2010				
	Permanent academics		Research publication units		
	Total	Total with doctorates	Publication units produced	Units per total permanent academics	Units per permanent academics with doctorates
UNIVERSITIES					
Cape Town	961	563	1166	1.2	2.1
Fort Hare	223	85	121	0.5	1.4
Free State	777	346	475	0.6	1.4
KwaZulu-Natal	1444	515	1057	0.7	2.1
Limpopo	756	150	84	0.1	0.6
North West	1003	474	514	0.5	1.1
Pretoria	1655	620	1186	0.7	1.9
Rhodes	317	168	323	1.0	1.9
Stellenbosch	886	491	1014	1.1	2.1
Western Cape	517	336	262	0.5	0.8
Witwatersrand	985	508	911	0.9	1.8
COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITIES					
Johannesburg	864	204	459	0.5	2.3
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan	558	204	219	0.4	1.1
Unisa	1369	468	644	0.5	1.4
Venda	302	101	56	0.2	0.6
Walter Sisulu	574	58	31	0.1	0.5
Zululand	246	83	69	0.3	0.8
UNIVERSITIES OF TECHNOLOGY					
Cape Peninsula	720	88	121	0.2	1.4
Central	243	64	33	0.1	0.5
Durban	562	56	43	0.1	0.8
Tshwane	803	139	151	0.2	1.1
Vaal	304	45	33	0.1	0.7
Mangosuthu	135	6	5	0.0	0.7

Source: Centre for Higher Education transformation (CHET)

Is there room for the diaspora to contribute to the academic core of South African Universities?

- Co-authorships
- Joint research
- Co-supervision of graduate students
- Adjunct appointments
- Teaching – e.g. visiting lecturerships, summer/winter schools
- Research Chairs

Some benefits…

- Makes expertise available – mitigates effects of brain drain
- Mentorship of graduate students and staff
- Capacity building through postgraduate training
- Fellowships for students and staff
- Access to the diaspora’s networks
- Reputational benefits
- Institutional partnerships

Examples of ‘institutionalised’ diaspora initiatives

- South African Network of Skills Abroad (SANSA)
- South African Diaspora Network
- South African Research Chairs Initiative
- The Economic Research Southern Africa (ERSA)
- University of the Witwatersrand’s Faculty of Health Sciences Alumni Diaspora Programme

Conclusion

- Individualised and fragmented initiatives - lack of a systematic institutional approach
- Engagements with the academic diaspora are uneven, ‘un-institutionalised’ and under-utilised.
- Therefore, the magnitude of the contribution of the academic diaspora to the academic core of South African universities is limited.