

included their own reading, sources on institutional rankings, followed by university websites and prospectuses. The influence of family, education agents, and friends appeared to be limited, indicating the direct and active engagement of the students in choosing their institutional destination.

Notwithstanding the impressive list of institutions that students were attending—including Ivy League universities—only a fraction of them paid for their studies: 72.3 percent were on full scholarships while 10.8 percent were on partial scholarships; 6.2 percent were supported by family. Less than 2 percent paid for their studies themselves.

Employment stands out as an overriding motivation for studying abroad, strongly suggesting a possible link between training and perceived future outcome. Students believed that their studies abroad would give them a competitive advantage by exposing them to a rich variety of skills and opportunities, as demonstrated by their choice of universities and study programs. In identifying attributes and

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skills considered critical for employability, students highlighted willingness to question one's own and others' ideas, ability to clearly express one's opinion, ability to write and speak in a foreign language, ability to rapidly acquire new knowledge, and ability to perform under pressure. Students appeared to be overwhelmingly confident in their degree of preparation for the labor market—particularly in their ability to use time efficiently, work productively with others, and master their field of study. The only areas where respondents showed limited confidence were knowledge/understanding of cultural and societal differences and ability to write and speak in a foreign language. Students also highlighted peculiar features of studying at foreign universities that provide them with special advantages. These included low student–faculty ratio, committed faculty, system of accountability, attention to skills-based training, and continuous assessment, which are ostensibly lacking in Ethiopia.

In terms of plans after graduation, this study shows the students' overwhelming interest in returning home. Given the strong evidence of poor return rate and widespread brain drain of Ethiopian students, this observation deserves further study and analysis. In a similar vein, the students also exhibited strong interest in contributing to the coun-

try's development after graduation, though this was tempered by a general lack of awareness regarding skills demand back home. This is due to the absence of information sharing mechanisms between students, the government, and potential employers in the Ethiopian context.

#### CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the connection between internationalization and employability through an exploration of factors such as motivations for studying abroad and the identification of key skills and attributes considered critical for employability—based on the opinions of international students from Ethiopia. The awareness of Ethiopian international students regarding the advantages of studying abroad—as critical in enhancing their employability opportunities—is evident and demonstrated by their selection of host universities and study programs, expected to provide competitive advantages upon graduation. The types of attributes and skills acquired, as well as the quality of the learning experience, were identified as key features for selecting foreign institutions. This may hold some implications for local institutions in terms of how curricula and their delivery can be structured.

Further, the lack of knowledge and information on Ethiopian students abroad justifies the need for systematic documentation and analysis supporting human capital planning and deployment—for government, businesses, NGOs, and think tanks. Such efforts would provide an opportunity to tap into the huge potential of the Ethiopian intelligentsia outside the borders of the country. This would also enable an in-depth insight into aspects of internationalization and study abroad. ■

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## Quality Assurance in Ghana: Accomplishments and Challenges

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Quality higher education is Africa's best chance of speeding its development and helping it become competitive in the knowledge-driven economy. This consideration has heightened concerns about the need for effective quality assurance (QA) mechanisms in African higher education systems, even though the direct link between quality education and QA is still open to debate.

Recent developments in Africa point to an increasing focus on using QA as an important mechanism to make higher education more relevant to developmental needs. For example, the African Union has rolled out several initiatives such as the Association of African Universities (AAU), the African HE Harmonization Strategy, the Tuning Africa Pilot Project, and the African Quality Rating Mechanism, to promote quality and excellence in Africa's higher education systems. In a more recent initiative, the Joint Africa–European Union Strategic Roadmap 2014–2017, QA is the primary action line to strengthen higher education in Africa. Additionally, a yearly International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa has been established as a platform to develop ideas and suggest strategies for the provision of quality education.

By 2015, about 25 African countries had established national QA agencies to oversee their higher education systems, and a dozen other countries were at relatively advanced stages of doing so. As in other countries, QA has been at the center of Ghana's efforts to revitalize its higher education. Since the early days of higher education in the country, Ghana has adopted various strategies to address the question of quality in higher education.

#### HISTORIC CONNECTION

In Ghana, QA in the higher education system dates back to the colonial era, when it took the form of mentorship. When the University of Gold Coast, now the University of Ghana, was established in 1948, it was affiliated with the University of London for mentorship and was therefore compelled to adhere to the University of London's academic standards. This relationship was severed in 1957, when Ghana gained independence. The University of Ghana attained sovereign status and its internal mechanisms ensured the maintenance of the academic standards bequeathed to it by its colonial mentor institution.

Affiliation as a QA measure was continued under Ghana's postindependence higher education system. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and the University of Cape Coast, established in 1961 and 1962 respectively, were affiliated to University of Ghana for mentorship until they gained chartered status. These institutions joined the University of Ghana as mentors of other higher education institutions (HEIs) to which they passed on established academic standards. Until 1993, when na-

tional quality assurance agencies were established, HEIs in Ghana had no external dimension to their QA.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CHALLENGES

The early 1990s witnessed increasing enrollments in HEIs, raising concerns for quality. Legislation was promulgated to safeguard the quality of higher education, which resulted in ACT 454 of 1993 establishing the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) as the lead regulatory body to advise the government on the direction of the overall provision of higher education. In addition, the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) Law 317 in 1993 established a QA agency, the National Accreditation Board (NAB), with the national responsibility for safeguarding the quality of higher education provision. This law has since been replaced by the National Accreditation Board Act 2007, Act 744.

To strengthen external QA for the differentiated HEIs, further acts have since been promulgated. Act 492 of 1993 established the National Board for Professional and Technician Examination (NABPTEX) with the mandate to oversee the academic operations of polytechnics and regulate

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#### Affiliation as a QA measure was continued under Ghana's postindependence higher education system.

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the conduct of professional and technician examinations. Act 778 established the National Teaching Council (NTC) with the mandate to regulate and improve the quality of teacher education in the country. These external QA interventions appear to have provided appreciable guarantee for stakeholders' expectations of quality in higher education, because a study on QA in Anglophone West Africa in 2012 concluded that Ghana had one of the most robust external QA systems in Africa.

Ghana has made significant efforts in instituting external QA mechanisms to enhance quality education provision, but not without notable challenges. First, QA regulators are not adequately resourced in terms of technical staff and QA professionals to conduct monitoring regularly. Presently, institutional audits are carried out only every five years—and not in all institutions. Second, HEIs increase in numbers without a corresponding strengthening of the technical and professional staff capacity of the regulators, which affects the quality of services rendered to HEIs. Last, in the midst of limited resources, there is role duplication amongst the QA agencies. For instance, a tertiary curriculum accredited by NABPTEX still needs to be submitted to

NAB for another accreditation.

#### CONCLUSION

In Ghana, the quality assurance of higher education has evolved from its colonial structure of being managed by HEIs to the establishment of external QA agencies, in order for the country to meet the contemporary demands on higher education. So far, remarkable progress in the external dimension of QA, with differentiated agencies, seems to have been made. This differentiated external QA strategy could perhaps serve as a useful reference point for other African countries working on strengthening their QA systems. Nonetheless, with the rapid growth of the sector, QA agencies are faced with notable challenges due to their limited capacity. What is yet to be ascertained is whether achievements in external QA have had a positive impact on the delivery of quality higher education in Ghana. ■

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## Academic Drift in China's Universities of Applied Technology

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The priority to make China an innovation nation is not new and results from a longer-term strategy to make China strong through science and technology (*kejiao xingguo*), including its scientific personnel (*keji rencai*). Through these policies, China's higher education institutions (HEIs) are charged with a new mission and significance. This applies in particular to a new type of HEIs, the Universities of Applied Technology (*yingyong jishu daxue*), or UATs, which were designed to play a significant role in China's higher education system, specifically by boosting cooperation with industry. While other countries struggle to mitigate academic drift in universities of technology, China's proposed transformation of more than 600 HEIs into UATs, designed to fulfil a distinct mission, is a major reform. Distinct from research universities, UATs are expected to devote themselves to regional economic development by cooperating with local small and medium enterprises in applied innova-

tion projects. Through this practical orientation, UATs were supposed to cultivate high-level personnel skilled in applied innovation, as well as diversify China's higher education system as a whole. Yet, achieving these goals turned out to be far more difficult than planned. Detailed case studies of policies and practices at four UATs and aspiring UATs of different sizes and in different regions of China revealed that achieving the goal of collaborating with local industry to boost innovation was undercut by significant academic drift, which distorted the original intention.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATION IN CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATION

China's HEIs have long been important engines for research and innovation. Premier Li Keqiang has forcefully emphasized the high degree of interdependency between the national innovation system and the scientific research activities of HEIs, as a force in turning China into an innovation nation. Preferential policies were given to innovative enterprises, HEIs, and research institutions in every field. But China's highly stratified higher education system ensures that universities and colleges with a stronger record of innovation attract far more funds as well as other resources. Research productivity also forms a major component of university rankings; within the intensively competitive Chinese academic system, this gives an advantage to China's top universities, which attract the best researchers, and whose graduates are more highly sought after by employers. While innovation is a national and regional priority, in practice Chinese HEIs are all running the same race, despite UATs' distinct mission to boost regional innovation through industry collaboration.

#### RATIONALE FOR ESTABLISHING UATs IN CHINA

Over 600 undergraduate colleges and universities (mostly local second-tier universities and independent colleges) established since 1999 are proposed as the main body of the planned UAT transformation. They now form a significant proportion of the 2,600 or so universities granting bachelor degrees. As mentioned above, UATs are an important measure to diversify China's higher education system. In particular, they are charged with providing advanced applied and technical talent to meet the needs of ever-changing industries. They are also expected to help lessen serious structural unemployment in some key industrial sectors, as well as strengthen the binary divide within the university sector—which over time has become increasingly blurred. Compared to major research universities undertaking basic and cutting-edge research, UATs should contribute to innovation not by directly discovering new knowledge, but by applying existing knowledge to practice, and refining existing processes by working with industry, an innovative process