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Enhancing human resources and organizational capacity of higher education institutions to catalyze innovations in agriculture and rural development

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ABSTRACT

This Issue of the African Journal of Rural Development (Volume 2, Issue 4) comprises ten articles featuring six broad themes. The themes include human capital development and associated innovative models for training and learning at higher education institutions in Africa; niche markets for smallholder farmers and end-users; dietary diversification for better nutrition; optimizing cropping systems; compensation for customary properties to facilitate public good; and, perception of target legatees on the delivery of agricultural extension services. These themes represent contemporary issues in the rural development context for which research solutions and innovations are needed which once taken to scale have potential to bring about change in communities. All the articles are authored by university-based research teams and the recommendations there-in are an indication of the contribution of higher education institutions to desired development targets at global and national levels. The key messages in this collection are (a) the need for promoting innovative models in postgraduate training and research that promote through use of heutagogy, a reflective learning approach that will facilitate the production of well-prepared graduates to handle the complexities of agricultural and rural development contexts; and, (b) beyond training human capital, higher education institutions play a critical role in generating solutions that have potential to accelerate uptake of innovations in agriculture and rural development for the betterment of livelihoods to promote experiential learning as a means of training labour market-ready graduates, universities should ensure a blended approach with respect to pedagogical, andragogical and heutagogical approaches to teaching for life-long learning.

Keywords: Andragogy, Heutagogy, human capital development, Pedagogy

RÉSUMÉ

Ce numéro de la Revue Africaine de Développement Rural (Volume 2, Numéro 4) comprend dix articles présentant six thèmes généraux. Ces thèmes comprennent le développement du capital humain et les modèles innovants associés pour la formation et l'apprentissage dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur en Afrique; les marchés de niche pour les petits exploitants et les utilisateurs finaux; la diversification alimentaire pour une meilleure nutrition; l'optimisation des systèmes de culture; la compensation pour les propriétés coutumières; et la perception des légataires sur la prestation de services de vulgarisation agricole. Ces thèmes reflètent des problèmes contemporains dans un contexte du développement rural pour lesquels des solutions de recherche et des innovations sont nécessaires, et qui, une fois mises à grande échelle, ont le potentiel de créer des changements dans les communautés. Tous les articles ont été rédigés par des équipes de recherche et des recommandations ont été données en guise de contribution des établissements d'enseignement supérieur aux

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objectifs de développement souhaités aux niveaux global et national. Les messages clés dans cette collection sont (a) la nécessité de promouvoir des modèles innovants de formation postdoctorale et de recherche qui favorisent l'utilisation d'une approche d'apprentissage facilitant la formation des diplômés bien préparés pour gérer les contextes de développement; et b) au-delà de la formation du capital humain, les établissements d'enseignement supérieur jouent un rôle essentiel dans la recherche de solutions susceptibles d'accélérer l'adoption d'innovations agricoles et rurales pour améliorer les moyens de subsistance et promouvoir l'apprentissage par l'expérience les diplômés prêts, les universités devraient assurer une approche mixte (pédagogique, andragogique et heutagogique) de formation durable.

Mots-clés: Andragogie, Heutagogie, développement du capital humain, pédagogie

INTRODUCTION

There is at a global level renewed debate and interest with reference to the role of higher education institutions, particularly universities, in catalyzing economic and social development. As indicated in Banya and Elu (1997), there has always been a continued search for relevance and different stakeholders have undertaken to examine the contribution that higher education institutions play in the development realm. In sub-Saharan Africa, the establishment of universities is grounded in colonial governments and it is appropriate after five decades of independence, to have a critical look at the role of higher education in nation building. In the context of this paper, a higher education institution (HEI) is defined as an organization that provides educational opportunities that build on secondary education, providing learning activities in specialized fields; this may include public or private universities, colleges, research institutes, training institutes, etc.

There has been in the last two decades an increasing demand for higher education in Africa and the response has been a proliferation of both public and private HEIs (Ogachi and Jowi, 2012). For example Kenya and Ethiopia had only two public universities in 1984 and 1991, respectively but by 2017 the number of public universities in the two countries increased to 29 (in Kenya) and 31 (in Ethiopia). This represents a phenomenal increase which reflects the situation in most countries in Africa.

In addition, universities in several countries are also undergoing internal restructuring, in part to compete more effectively for private students whose tuition payments make up an increasing percentage of university budgets. This is being driven by the increasing size of the universities and the need to decentralize decision-making. Thus, many universities are forming constituent colleges, which have much more autonomy and where the principal has assumed many of the responsibilities formerly held by the Vice Chancellor. While the expansion of HEIs in terms of numbers and restructuring processes are geared more towards increasing access to training and learning for attainment of higher degrees, there is need to focus on the other expected roles that HEIs are mandated to serve society, namely research and outreach.

This paper is a synthesis of the nine articles presented in the African Journal of Rural Development Volume 2, Issue 4. The results presented in these articles are arising from research-based training that is supervised postgraduate students research leading to the award of higher degrees (Masters, and/ or PhD). The purpose of this synthesis is two-fold. First is to decipher for readers the contents in this Issue while at the same time creating more visibility, with the aim of promoting readership of the individual articles. The second is to build on these research for development efforts to articulate the innovation systems perspectives as an integral piece in higher education institutions.

The nub in the articles presented in the Issue.

Two articles (Erbaugh *et al.*, 2017 and Mulu-Mutuku *et al.*, 2017) present innovative models for human capital development. The emphasis is that for universities to remain relevant in the development context, they have to re-model teaching and learning approaches with a goal of producing learners who are well –prepared for the complexities of a dynamic workplace. These studies demonstrate that universities can produce labor-market ready graduates by innovatively blending teacher-centered approaches (pedagogical) with learner-centered approaches (andragogical) to achieve lifelong learning (heutagogy). Pedagogy, andragogy and heutagogy are comprehensively defined by Knowles (1975), Eberle (2009) and Blaschke (2012). In the past, universities and particularly colleges engaged in building capacity in the Life Sciences (including Agricultural Sciences) have been challenged to move away from pedagogy and embrace andragogy (see Table 1) owing to the need to ensure experiential learning. Indeed several universities through on-farm and community action research undertaken at postgraduate levels have adopted andragogical approaches but it is better if they transitional more to reflective practice which as indicated in Hase and Kenyon (2007) is a key characteristic of heutagogy. Reflective practice is viewed as a good tool for cultivating lifelong learning

especially since “when a practitioner becomes a researcher into their own practice, they engage in a continuing process of self-education” (Schon, 1983). Heutagogy’s holistic approach takes into account the learner’s prior learning experiences and the way in which these influence how learning happens, by considering these past experiences and the learner’s current experiences and reflections upon these, the learner moves into a growth process that has potential to lead to transformative learning – and this among others is the desired end in view for many stakeholders in Higher Education Sector in Africa.

Providing an enabling environment is key for developing the right skills-set that should be in position to generate solutions and innovations in the others themes featuring in the remaining seven articles published in the Issue. In addition to innovative models for human-capital development, the other four themes addressed in the remaining seven papers are all pertinent to the national, continental and global agenda as provided for in key different frameworks (Table 2). In line with reports from elsewhere (Rany *et al.*, 2012), the alignment as well as the involvement of HEIs in the national, regional and global development agenda is a key indicator to verify relevance of universities in generation and application of knowledge to social issues.

Table 1. Contrasts between pedagogy and andragogy

Pedagogy	Andragogy
The learner is dependent – the teacher determines what is learned, when it is learned, and how learning is evaluated.	The learner is more independent – the teacher encourages this independence and guides the learner.
The experience of the learner is not considered to be significant -teaching methods are didactic.	Experience is valued as a rich resource for learning – and forms the basis of discussions and problem solving, etc.
People learn what society expects them to – the curriculum is standardised.	People learn what they need to – the curriculum is organised around their needs.
Learning themes are organised around abstract disciplines.	Learning themes are organised around experiences, problems and/or expected competencies.

Table 2. Link between research themes featuring in articles and development frameworks

	Key thematic addressed by respective article in the Issue	Examples of National/ Continental/ Global Framework
1	Innovative models for human capital development (Erbaugh <i>et al.</i> , 2017 and Mulu-Mutuku <i>et al.</i> , 2017)	Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA)
2	Niche markets for smallholder farmers and end-users (Acheampong and Antwi, 2017; Mbudzyaa <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Mugonola <i>et al.</i> , 2017)	Sustainable Development Goal 1. Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy 2015 - 2025
3	Dietary diversification for better nutrition; optimizing cropping systems (Kavoi <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Kiyimba <i>et al.</i> , 2017)	Sustainable Development Goal 1, Target 1.4
4	Compensation for customary properties to facilitate public good (Kabanga and Mooya, 2017)	National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) Act 2001
5	Perception of target legatees on the delivery of agricultural extension services (Sebuliba-Mutumba <i>et al.</i> , 2017)	Sustainable Development Goal 2, Target 2a

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

There is consensus that the HEIs must be involved in national, regional and global development agenda beyond training and producing graduates, they are expected to generate and disseminate knowledge, innovations and inventions for uptake pathways. For this to manifest, models of experiential as well reflective teaching and learning that are characteristic of heutagogy are paramount at HEIs. This challenges the status quo and there will be need for changes to provide an enabling organizational capacity to implement innovations in research-based training, including remodeling existing academic programmes and non-academic support services to promote experiential learning as a means of training labour market-ready graduates, universities should ensure a blended approach with respect to pedagogical, andragogical and heutagogical

approaches to teaching for life-long learning.

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STATEMENT OF NO CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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