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# ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES: LESSONS FROM ACBF'S INTERVENTIONS\*

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**Abstract:** This paper draws on the extant literature and experiences of selected ACBF-supported programs to interrogate approaches to enhancing institutional leadership in African universities. The paper posits that African universities must proactively take charge of fostering institutional leadership so as to translate leadership competence into strategic assets. Such assets are key to bolstering intellectual capital, strategic scanning, i.e. the capacity to recognize the behaviour of interconnected systems to make effective decisions under varying strategic and risk scenarios, and the transformation of knowledge. To this end, African universities need to transcend their current 'modern' system of education to a post-modern perspective, which recognizes context, collaboration and knowledge as valued skills. Enhancing institutional leadership is also crucial if Africa is to compete in today's rapidly globalizing world and knowledge society. More importantly, doing so has direct impact on shaping the quality of leadership on the Continent, and consequently the resulting policy decisions and governance. The paper concludes that while institutional, political, demographic as well as resource challenges exist, African universities today, are uniquely positioned as a result of uptake of knowledge management, strengthened private-public partnerships and advances in ICT to enhance institutional leadership.

**Keywords:** *African universities, institutional leadership, intellectual capital, knowledge management, and strategic partnerships.*

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\*An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Workshop on 'Capacity Building for Global Competitiveness in Developing Countries: The Nexus of Technology Development and Transfer, Education and Culture'. La Palm Royal Beach Hotel Accra, GHANA, October 2009.

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## INTRODUCTION

African countries currently face several developmental challenges derived from high prevalence of poverty, the need to meet the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the HIV/AIDS pandemic, objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and complexities of globalization (ACBF 2005:5). Issues of macro-economic stability, governance, food security, plight of internally displaced peoples, and the need to address human and institutional capacity gaps in fragile, failed and post-conflict states all pose serious challenges to the Continent's development agenda. The failure to advance Africa's quest for regional integration coupled with the growing exodus of the continent's brightest minds in the face of an increasingly complex, competitive and uncertain world, where the creation, accumulation and strategic utilization of cutting edge knowledge and information technology is central to a nation's survival and competitiveness (Stiglitz, 1999; ACBF, 2005; Mchombu, 2007), has further compounded an already dire situation. The continent currently harbours a disproportionate number (approximately 34 out of 50) of the

world's least developed countries. Poverty is on the increase in Africa and, as indicated in the recent report on the UN Millennium Development initiative, at current trend, Africa risks not meeting the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015. In light of the enormity of the development challenges facing Africa, the need for leadership at the individual, organizational and institutional levels, who are attuned to global developments, equipped with creative and innovative skills and committed to the continent's growth and prosperity, has never been so essential. Addressing the challenges will entail an investment in and nurturing of, leaders across the Continent.

There is an increasing recognition that the role of universities in research, ICT and learning, is vital to national social progress and development. Undoubtedly, universities possess the potential to provide rich opportunities for hiring and developing leaders, but universities can also foster meaningful learning opportunities for leadership development through collaborative group initiatives that serve both the institution and the community. This will specifically require universities and their respective

leaderships to assume the mantle of providing the foundation and key building blocks of ideas, knowledge and discoveries that countries need in the medium and long term. To this end, multiple modes of enabling interaction amongst students and faculty and between faculties are critical. Universities will not only need to hire and develop leaders, they will also need to nurture and reinforce enactment of the qualities and behaviours desired in those leaders (Sankar, 2003). The leadership of universities will further need to encourage and actively pursue institutional policies that foster conditions that develop and support quality teaching and research vital for developing the next generation of leaders. Such leaders will need to possess the capacity to deal effectively with complex sets of constituencies.

Global developments of the past decade, in particular the shift to a knowledge-economy, are also engendering new challenges, opportunities and possibilities for the leadership of institutions of higher education. These changes are calling for the rethinking of the role of higher education, and more specifically a thorough interrogation of the caliber and mandate of the leadership of

institutions of higher education. To this end, leaders of educational institutions are increasingly being held accountable, amongst others, for their support to growth and long-term success of dynamic learners (students and employees) and their ability to translate leadership competence into strategic assets.

Today, the previously held vision of an academic leader (provost, rector, president, chancellor, or principal) as a quiet scholar has been overtaken by that of an executive who is politically astute, economically savvy, business aware and emotionally intelligent. An executive who possesses the: a) ability to function in environments with weak governance and high unpredictability; b) capacity to generate strategic maps of pressure points and risk scenarios; c) preparedness to lead in conditions of conflict and work with tools to function under diverse potential futures; and d) values and behaviours that serve as a guide in making choices in challenging environments (Léautier, 2009b). Simultaneously, the marketplace for higher education is changing rapidly with the advent of information technologies, the growing demand for knowledge workers and the

rapid globalization of all sectors (private and public). These developments mirror the shift in the international economy toward a global network organized around the value of knowledge, and the capacity of people and organizations to use technological developments wisely, effectively and efficiently. Universities are thus being compelled to transform their structures, missions, processes and programs in order to be both flexible and responsive to today's emerging socio-economic and knowledge needs (Hanna, 2003:25).

The increasing focus on learning and knowledge, reflected in phrases such as "knowledge society" and "knowledge economy", signifies a shift away from an earlier discourse about the "information society." This change in discourse has precipitated a rethink regarding of how universities and their leadership are perceived in terms of being proactive, visionary and current. As a result, the ivory tower perception of universities is fast becoming a relic of the past – of a time when knowledge was to be guarded in order to be preserved, when it served to separate those with 'class' from those without, and when the primary medium for storing knowledge

was physical and geographically bound books (Hanna, 2003). The vision of knowledge transmission has similarly changed with the birth of concepts like "learning by doing" (Cope and Watts, 2000; Aldrich, 2005), "X-teams" (Ancona, et al., 2002; Ancona and Bresman, 2007), and "Theory U" (Scharmer, 2007). African universities are also bracing this wind of change.

Growing competition faced by universities in the areas of learning and research – a result of globalization and a technology driven knowledge economy – is compelling many to carve out niches that focuses on inter-generational, cross disciplinary and societally-valuable learning and knowledge as well as rethink their specific role in civil society to transform societies and enhance transmittal of appropriate values. Universities no longer can afford academic insularity. To thrive, universities increasingly are embarking on strategic public-private partnerships and collaborative endeavours, which essentially enhance peer-learning, knowledge sharing and leadership capacity development. Universities also need to integrate learning technologies into their strategic planning and their setting of

institutional priorities (Hanna, 2003). This integration will need to be inclusive and participatory if community buy-in and sustainability is to be achieved.

Drawing on experiences of ACBF's partnerships with African universities over the past decade, this paper submits that many African universities, albeit to varying degrees, are already in the midst of strategic transformations in response to context-specific and global challenges and opportunities (e.g. geo-political, socio-demographic, economic, technological). The dynamic result of these challenges and opportunities is the development and adoption of creative strategies – all of which speak to proactive institutional leadership. The paper, however, acknowledges that the scope of the subject at hand is not one that can be captured in its full diversity and complexity in a 20-minute presentation. Accordingly, the focus here will be limited to approaches aimed at enhancing institutional leadership in African universities using the ACBF's partnerships and strategic collaborations with institutions of higher learning across the continent as reference points. The objective is to revisit the dialogue

on institutional leadership within African universities, as this is central to any effort to reposition higher education at the core of Africa's capacity building and broader development agenda. Areas where African universities need to invest more relate to the business acumen of its leaders and the development of tools to enhance emotionally astute leadership styles (Higgs, 2002; Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008).

In the subsequent sections, this paper will: a) discuss issues of institutional leadership and ways to develop leadership capacity in African universities; b) highlight the challenges to, as well as opportunities and possibilities for, African universities posed by a rapidly globalizing society; and, c) underscore ACBF's partnership experience with African universities as a strategic collaboration framework to build institutional leadership and capacity. The paper concludes that, despite existing political, institutional and resource challenges, African universities today are uniquely placed as a result of an uptake of knowledge management, strengthened private-public partnerships and advances in information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance institutional leadership.

## **INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ITS ROLE IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES**

### **Institutional Leadership – some conceptual issues**

The discourse on institutional leadership gained grounds at the end of the 1990s. The growing interest was sparked, on the one hand, by the increasing need to translate leadership capabilities into the strategic assets of institutions, and on the other hand, by the novel approaches to management which include concepts such as cascading leadership, intellectual capital, organizational learning, knowledge management and self-organizing systems (Kivipõld and Vadi, 2008; Léautier, 2009a and 2009b).

The leadership discourse is conceptually bound up with new and merging insights relating to effective dealing with the growing complexity of the environment(s) – including policy and institutional environments – in which one's governance systems and developmental efforts exist (Fitzgerald, 2004). Viewed from this perspective, the discourse on institutional leadership opens up to some essential aspects of organizational leadership capability that

can be defined as the collective ability to detect and cope with changes in the external environment by maintaining the primary goal of the institution (Kivipõld and Vadi, 2008).

Institutional leaders increasingly operate in very complex and interconnected environments. The degree of interconnectedness impacts their decision-making processes as well as the outcomes of their decisions (Léautier, 2009a). Understanding the dynamics of one's interconnected environment is thus central to: a) shaping strategy; b) developing effective risk management approaches; and c) selecting from a series of potential courses of action. Accordingly, leaders need to be conversant with the behaviour of interconnected systems to make effective decisions under varying strategic and risk scenarios. Leaders also need to be equipped with the right set of values and behaviours to be successful in a specific context (Léautier, 2009a and 2009 b). Interconnectedness further places a premium on the interaction between knowledge and culture.

The 1998 World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE) reaffirmed that institutions of

higher learning, and their leadership, have an unprecedented role to play in today's society as pillars to endogenous capacity building and sustainable democracy. This reaffirmation was in recognition of the fact that institutions of higher learning are increasingly regarded, and rightly so, as the bedrock upon which nations build a better and solid future.

### **The Need for an Enhanced Institutional Leadership in African Universities**

African universities must proactively take on the task of fostering institutional leadership so as to translate leadership competence into strategic assets for the continent's development agenda. Such assets are key to bolstering intellectual capital and strategic scanning, that is the capacity to recognize the behaviour of interconnected systems to make effective decisions under varying strategic and risk scenarios, and the transformation of knowledge as a leveraging mechanism for the achievement of specified societal objectives and goals (Léautier, 2009a). As primary places of learning on the Continent, African universities need to also be at the forefront of evolving pedagogical tools, taking a leadership

role in research in this critical area. To that effect, African universities need to transcend their current 'modern' system of education in order to have a 'post-modern' perspective, which recognizes context, creative partnerships and knowledge as valued skills. African universities need to develop strategic collaborations to shore up weaknesses in program content and delivery, service to students, or other areas key to offering high-quality programs. Negotiating these strategic challenges is crucial not only for the future of African universities, but also for the Continent's development and competitiveness in a rapidly globalizing world.

The communiqué of the 2008 University Leader's Forum (22-25 November, 2008) concurs with the above-stated viewpoint in noting that effective "leadership [is essential to] bring about sustainable, institutional conditions to develop and support quality teaching and research vital for developing the next generation of scholars." The communiqué further submits that a "technology-enabled environment is a key requirement for ensuring higher research productivity and a high retention of talented academic staff."

In fact, across the Continent, increasing responsibility is being bestowed upon, and demanded of, the leadership of universities owing to the competing, interconnected and complex issues of institutional autonomy, globalization, migration of Africa's intellectual capital to so-called greener pastures outside the continent, and technological developments of today's knowledge society (Sawyerr, 2004; ACBF, 2005; Fajonyomi, 2008). Recent studies also suggest that a growing number of African university leaders are recognizing the challenges of the past two decades as being the major underlying factors for the current transformation of higher education across sub-Saharan Africa. Notable among these challenges are the financial hurdles heightened with the almost universal withdrawal of state support to the social sector as a result of the first and second generations of structural adjustment programs; the migration of the continent's intellectual capital to greener pastures outside the continent; the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and the demographic explosion of the population and the rapid growth of enrolments in tertiary education across the continent (Sawyerr, 2004; ACBF, 2007; AAU 2009). In addition to the above, weak

existing leadership capacity led to the gradual realization of the dire consequences on the institutions' ability to deliver services, and embrace cutting-edge knowledge and technologies vital to their effectiveness, competitiveness and sustainability.

As a result of the aforementioned interactions and complexities, the tools and frameworks that institutional leaders previously employed to make decisions now appear inadequate. African universities therefore need a cadre of leaders who possess the requisite leadership skills that empower them to navigate through the complexities and interconnectedness of 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge society. The specific skills required are as follows: a) ability to function in environments with low predictability; b) preparedness to handle diverse potential futures; c) capacity to generate strategic maps of pressure points and risk scenarios; d) skills, set of values, and behaviours that guide them in making choices in challenging circumstances; and, e) capacity to identify patterns of change (shifts), extract important relationships (interactions), and select from a variety of approaches for handling challenges (Léautier 2009a and 2009 b). The strategic rethinking of the role of



institutional leadership in African universities is thus inevitable. In this regard, the dialogue should be articulated around issues of global competitiveness, knowledge utilization, changing geo-political landscape, and paradigm shifts in the role of the African university from one of control and regulation to one of facilitation and flexibility.

The human dimension is, however, central to any effort of enhancing leadership capacity in African universities' complex entanglement of systems, processes and people. As dynamic institutions, universities do not function effectively if its constituent members do not have the right combination of skills, knowledge and attitudes, as well as a structured system in place for the regulation of interactions.

While leadership capacity enhancement is both desirable and doable, it entails investments in time and resources, and dedication to rethink old ways and to develop new, more cost-effective and locally-driven methods of doing things. This will not be achieved without an investment in change and meeting the costs that come with that change (Léautier 2009a and 2009 b). African governments, policy makers, and

development partners should therefore collectively take responsibility and be fully committed to enhancing leadership capacity and developing transformational leaders.

Attempts to enhance the institutional leadership of African universities will need to occur in tandem with capacity development efforts aimed at uncovering and designing creative learning tools and practices, while simultaneously absorbing and effectively utilizing new trends, knowledge and educational learning tool kits and techniques. The development of institutional leadership should be conceptualized as a purposive process, which is inherently value-based, and one that must be designed and implemented as an integral and critical part of the university experience. To this end, African universities essentially need to transcend their current 'modern' system of education to a post-modern perspective, which recognizes context, collaboration and knowledge as valued skills and assets. To this end, African universities essentially need to transcend their current approaches to become adaptive and creative. This transformation requires a new kind of leadership.

## **CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND POSSIBILITIES FOR AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES**

### **Challenges**

As alluded to earlier, universities across sub-Saharan Africa continue to face a number of hurdles that include, amongst others, the transition from an information to a knowledge economy; resource constraints; emigration of the continent's intellectual capital; the HIV/AIDS pandemic; intrusion of politics into academia; and an explosion in the number of students enrolling in tertiary education across the continent. Further, the Continent looks towards universities as the place to uncover solutions to the myriad challenges facing sub-Saharan Africa, by generating the environment within which such solutions may be found.

The disengagement of the state from social provisioning, itself a direct result of the era of market reform, which saw the introduction of structural adjustment programs in the 1980s, and the reduction in the resources envelope for African universities, severely impacted the development of these institutions' leadership and subsequent contribution to

their respective constituents. Rising student-teacher ratios, poor salaries, and political intrusion subverting academic freedom and institutional autonomy have further compounded the effects of the challenges mentioned above. The collective result has been the erosion of leadership capacity and a loss of African universities' intellectual capital. Thus, today, many African universities are but a shadow of their past glorious days - drained of faculty, lacking in equipment and teaching materials, and housed in degenerated infrastructure (Sutherland-Addy, 1993; ACBF 2007).

There is also a growing dichotomy between the need for consistency in public service delivery, and the concurrent need for continuous change and improvement through good management and effective resource utilization (ACBF, 2005, 2007; CAPAM, 2009). As a result, African university leaders are grappling with a difficult and change-oriented working environment. University leadership are being compelled to seek a balance between the 'new' and the 'old', while at the same time striving to develop the requisite capacity required to negotiate the complexities of networked and interconnected spaces (CAPAM,

2009). This development, that calls for new capacity, knowledge, skills and competencies.

Unfortunately, across Africa, with notable exceptions, the executive heads of universities are appointed or confirmed by governments. As a result, university leaders have generally tended to expect their respective governments to bear the primary responsibility of addressing the major challenges faced by their institutions. Furthermore, the major preoccupation of the leadership of African universities was, until recently, restricted to attempts to mitigate the impacts of ongoing macro-economic and geo-political transformations on their institutions, with a view of preserving their previous direction and pace – in short, restore the levels of government subventions, and return to ‘normal’ operations (Sawyer, 2004).

Negotiating the challenges and creating a context supportive of innovation, experimentation and learning presumes committed, passionate, and visionary leadership because, for the most part, the leadership of African universities has not been able to rise up to the crises around higher education (ACBF, 2007; AAU

2009). However, the current operating systems in many universities are inadequate to meet the tasks of developing the intellectual capital and leadership capacity required for development, and the knowledge base vital to effective macro-economic progress on the continent.

This notwithstanding, if African universities are to strategically position themselves in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, there is an urgent need to expose the next generation to significant and meaningful experiences, provide mentoring and training programs that will transfer knowledge from the current generation to the next, enhance local participation, and identify possible future leaders at an early stage (The GREEN Resource, 2008). According to Haynes (2003), complex problems are not resolved by breaking them down into smaller pieces. They can only be addressed by looking at the whole system – they require a holistic and systemic approach. More knowledge may not necessarily help as evidence and facts may be contested; consensus may not be reached on the identification, definition or solution of the problem – positions are entrenched. They thus require a participative approach to arrive

at a 'shared' understanding that opens up the possibility for concerted actions (Kahane, 2004; Klijn, 2008). This paper will argue further that African universities must learn how to tap the collective intelligence of society to extract knowledge and meaning about emerging patterns and trends and use it to guide actions. They should take steps to encourage social innovation; leverage the power of networks to connect actors, problems and solutions in new ways; and create hospitable environments that promote exploration and experimentation (Bourgon, 2009:15). Doing so is central to any efforts to get African universities to advance from a reactive to a more proactive position.

### **Opportunities and Possibilities**

The rather grim picture painted above notwithstanding, there is a renewed vision and evolving strategy for African universities, triggered by the possibilities of globalization and technology, as well as by an influx of a newer generation of academicians, trained overseas yet who opt to come back to the continent. The individual and collective efforts of these interactions and

complexities appear to be rejuvenating the academic leadership landscape in Africa.

The forward-looking and competent style of the younger generation of academics (Gmelch and Sarros, 1996), recent developments in information, communication and technology (ICT), including mobile communication, coupled with the steady growth in the numbers of strategic alliances/exchange programs between African and non-African universities - mainly from the North America and Europe - have heightened the demand for new knowledge, modes of knowledge production and dissemination. These partnerships are radically transforming the production, utilization, dissemination and recreation of knowledge by universities and other higher education organizations (Sawyer, 2004; ACBF 2007). Such partnerships and creative collaborations are making way for the establishment of a dual structure in which university departments and schools are supplemented by centres engaged in knowledge application, both locally and globally (AAU, 2009).

The evolving partnerships trends can be summed up into the following four broad categories:

- a. University and industry linkages (creative labs);
- b. Inter-university partnerships (associations and networks);
- c. University and society/community ties (common projects) and,
- d. Student, teacher interactions (community of learners and knowledge).

As individual learning experiences become more entangled with personal and professional experiences, the leadership of African universities is reforming the delivery, context and pedagogical approaches used to align interdisciplinary learning and instruction to lived-experiences and issues. To this end, African universities are increasingly integrating various perspectives from the plethora of disciplines and approaches. One such 'new' approach for the negotiating the post-modern era of University education is the adoption and utilization of e-technology and knowledge management. These cutting-edge developments are offering African universities glimpses into the possible future of higher education, while at the same time paving the way (from a policy and implementation

standpoint) for other universities to follow suite (Watkins and Corry, 2002). Examples of this nature include the ACBF-funded Public Sector Management Training Program (PSMTP) at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), Ghana (ACBF, 2007); the e-based engineering learning of 2iE in Burkina Faso - an excellent example of public support to a private initiative (Sy and Haithie, 2009); and the myriad African self-directed learners, who access the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Open Course Ware (MIT OCW) from approximately 54 mirror sites of university campuses across Africa, for its knowledge products and toolkits - i.e. website, textbooks, course outlines (Matkin, 2005).

Globalization, an uptake in knowledge management and the explosion of information technology across Africa, is further opening up strategic spaces and fostering new collaborations for the improvement of leadership capacity and the introduction of dynamic pedagogic approaches to delivering higher education. African universities' growing collaboration with similar institutions from outside the continent and the fast-pace of the technology

society are some of the factors that are calling for the dynamism in the leadership and the flexibility in the teaching systems, which offers a learning opportunity to students from any location at any-time. Therefore, the flexibility provided by an e-learning is gaining wide acceptance across the Continent. With benefits such as widened and flexible access to tertiary education, pedagogic innovation and decreased cost, the attraction to e-learning by both students and faculty continues to grow. Another key trait of e-learning, which makes it so attractive to many, is its ability to offer learners the possibility of proactive access to information and performance assessment resources that are not constrained by training design or delivery mechanism. Furthermore, the potential ability of e-learning to deliver high-quality instructional services to all learners regardless of location, family or cultural background, or disability has made this instructional tool very appealing.

Studies suggest that Africa is evolving unique solutions as a result of effective e-based learning tools to negotiate conventions. Notable in this regard, are the strides made in the e-banking sector and rural information

systems (Brown and Molla, 2005; Boateng, 2006; Karamagi-Akiiki, 2006). Here, the rapid diffusion of internet services and mobile telecommunications has transformed banking and information systems across the Continent, making it possible for many people to access newer and often more flexible services of e-banking and cell-phone banking (Boateng, 2006; Brown and Molla, 2005). Similar dynamics have been documented in the area of rural information systems, where the growth in internet communication and the widespread accessibility to mobile phone technology have combined to transform how knowledge is communicated and disseminated (Karamagi-Akiiki, 2006). The Foundation's presentation tomorrow, as part of the panel session on 'Using ICT to Enhance Socio-economic Development in Africa,' speaks in greater detail to this development.

The ten-year strategic partnership program of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the South African Association of Vice-Chancellors, and the Association of African Universities (AAU), titled 'Renewing the African University,' articulate a vision in consonance with e-learning, and seeks to reposition

African universities at the centre of sustainable efforts to rebuild the continent. This author thus posits that, while an adoption of knowledge tools and techniques has its roots in the private sector, there is an increasing recognition by the public sector of the role of knowledge as a pillar of equitable development (van der Velden, 2002). In addition, the public sector is actively utilizing the techniques of knowledge management to transform and re-think how education is approached in universities and other institutions of higher learning. A large number of African universities, including many ACBF-funded universities, currently employ the tools of ICT and knowledge management, albeit to varying degrees, as part of their standard teaching pedagogy. Central to this widespread adoption of ICTs and knowledge management is the fact that e-learning has proven itself as a tool that increases both access to and standards of, education, is cost-effective, and have the capacity to reach a wider audience spread over time and space without compromising the quality of the teaching.

In the following sections, this paper highlights ACBF's strategic partnerships with African

universities, details creative approaches to enhancing institutional leadership, and concludes that, in spite of the aforementioned challenges, African universities today are uniquely placed to enhance their institutional leadership and reposition higher learning at the heart of the Continent's development agenda.

#### **ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP: ACBF'S EXPERIENCES WITH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES**

ACBF, through its partnerships with African universities, seeks to improve tertiary education in Africa with the view of unleashing the potential of higher education in building institutional and intellectual capital essential for enhanced governance at the regional, national and institutional levels. This initiative also meets with the criteria of strengthening African states as democratic entities, the development of appropriate local solutions to the continent's problems, and the active participation of Africa in the global knowledge economy.

Over the past decade and a half, the Foundation has committed approximately US\$110 million in technical and financial support

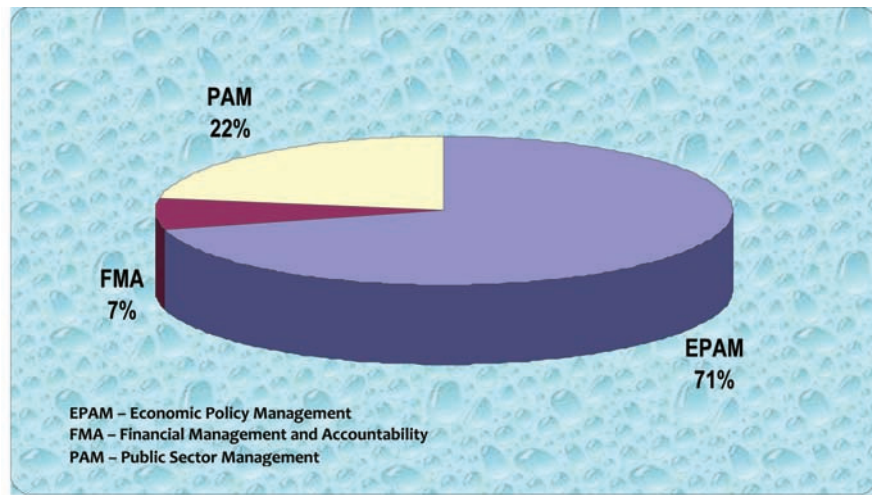
to tertiary institutions across sub-Saharan Africa (Annex 1). The support to tertiary education is largely geared towards increasing the pool of skilled professionals in the fields of economic policy management (EPAM), public sector management (PAM), Financial management and accountability (FMA) (Fig. 1a on page 11).

ACBF also provides institutional support aimed at reviving infrastructure, strengthening human resources and enhancing institutional leadership in the participating universities. The Foundation's support to tertiary institutions has grown from US\$5.0 million in 1992 to an impressive US\$1110 million in

2007. During this same period, the number of initiatives funded, has grown from 1 to 45. The cyclical but steadily growing funding pattern (Fig 1b and 1c on page 13) reflects, in part, the Foundation's 4-year funding cycle to projects/programs, and the fact that developing a meaningful project often requires a year's preparation.

During this period, invaluable lessons were learnt, notably: a) the crucial role of African ownership and leadership in the institutional development process; b) the centrality of capacity development, and therefore the need for greater effectiveness of academic institutions to enable them to nurture pools of

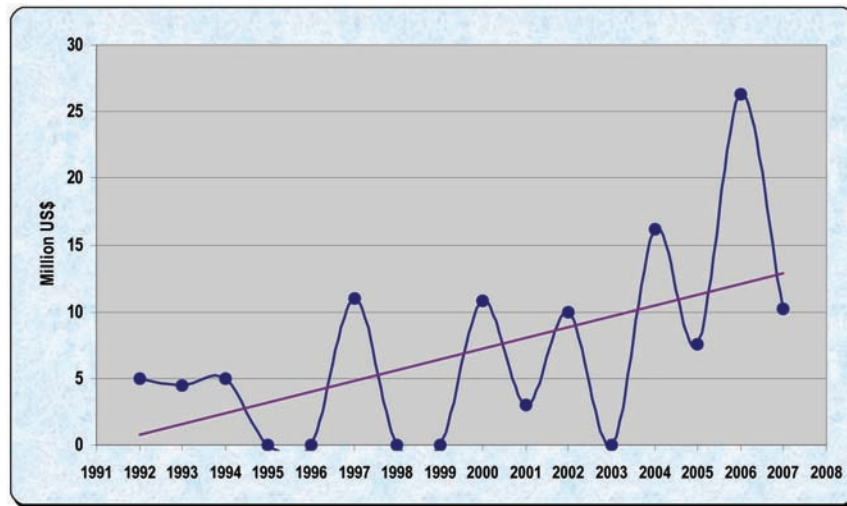
**Fig 1a:** ACBF support to Tertiary Institutions 1992-2007: By Core Competency Area



Source: Compiled from ACBF Annual Reports and Financial Statements (1992-2008)



**Fig. I b:** ACBF Support to Tertiary Institutions 1992-2007: Cyclical but Growing



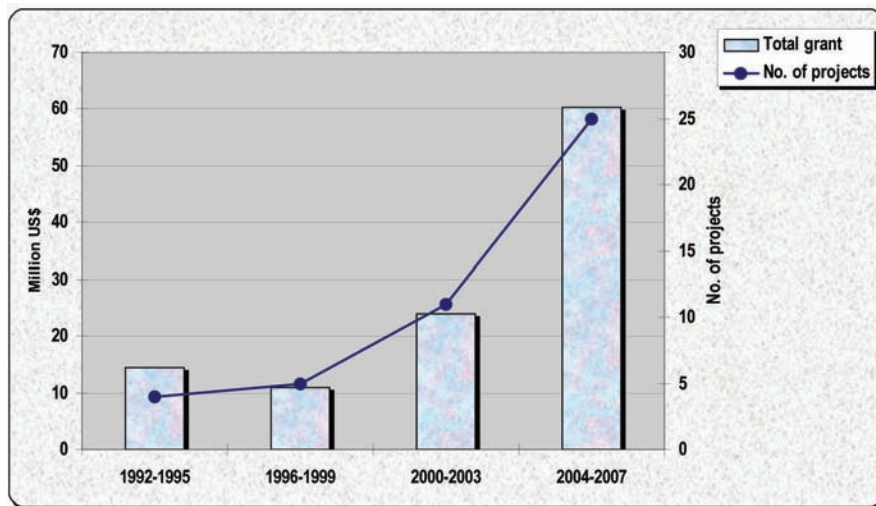
Source: Compiled from ACBF Annual Reports and Financial Statements (1992-2008)

qualified expertise; c) the critical role of partnerships in addressing institutional capacity challenges; and d) the long-term nature of capacity development interventions

in African institutions of higher learning.

The shift to a knowledge economy thus presents immense

**Fig. I c:** ACBF Support to Tertiary Institutions 1992-2007: Three-year cumulative



Source: Compiled from ACBF Annual Reports and Financial Statements (1992-2008)

opportunities for enhancing leadership capacity within African universities. As articulated above, it is possible to triangulate the tools and techniques of knowledge management, private-public partnership and conventional education to negotiate the challenges of the knowledge economy. In so doing, institutional leadership and management capacity can be creatively leveraged to meet the unique needs of African universities in today's rapidly globalizing society.

To reap the potential benefits of integrating knowledge society requires an adequate knowledge strategy to be built in capacity development activities. Drawing on its experiences and successes of both the Economic Policy Management (EPM) and the Joint Facility for Elective courses (JFE) programs, ACBF is currently considering adopting an e-learning strategy/application of ICT-based methods to decentralize the JFE program under the African Economic Research Consortium's Collaborative Masters Program in Economics (AERC-CMAP) and the Programme de Troisième Cycle Inter-Universitaire (PTCI). The Foundation's strategy is guided by the need to cut down costs while expanding the access of

training programs without compromising the quality of the programs. Viewed from this perspective, this paper argues that the adoption of a flexible e-learning system by African universities will enable the delivery of programs to an increasing number of students over space and time and in a more cost-effective manner. Doing so should go a long way to enrich student learning, increase the choice and modularity of programs, widen access to learning and facilitate collaboration within and between participating institutions. In deciding to shift toward e-technology, ACBF has recognized and identified potential challenges that could adversely impact the successful implementation and rollout of its EPM and JFE programs. In this regard, ACBF paid particular attention to issues pertaining to access (bandwidth problems, electricity supply, etc); skills and training (human and intellectual capital of potential institutions); literacy (digital, information and multimedia literacy challenges); conducive policy and economic environment (prohibition of Voice over Internet protocol (VoIP)); and, content and application of programs.

Any roadmap for the establishment and management of an

effective e-learning will definitely have its roadblocks, detours and minefields. However, with careful planning, and a well-informed roll-out plan, it should be possible to navigate through these obstacles, stay on course and reach the goal.

Again, while many studies flag issues of infrastructural development in Africa as a hurdle, the Foundation's experience with African universities seems to point to innovative solutions to some of the key difficulties associated with infrastructure development in many African countries. For instance, the lack of adequate Internet connectivity and electricity supply in a country can be creatively addressed by hosting the main server in another country with excellent infrastructure. The use of alternative power sources, such as solar energy, can equally contribute to the resolution of challenges related to power disruptions. Furthermore, the numerous collaborations with colleges and universities in North America, Europe and Japan, to name but a few, are providing much needed resources and equipment directly channeled to African universities, and

fostering dynamic knowledge exchanges, peer-learning and knowledge sharing, and thereby enhancing institutional leadership.

ACBF's partnership and collaboration initiatives with African universities and tertiary institutions are spread across the east, west, central and southern Africa. The collaborations involve universities and tertiary institutions in Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone countries, and have to-date collectively produced over 5,000 alumni who occupy leadership positions across the Continent and beyond<sup>‡</sup>. The Economic Policy Management (EPM) training programs, established in seven universities in the following countries – Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Mozambique, Uganda, and more recently, Zambia – are gaining greater visibility and positive recognition as their graduates join public sector institutions and contribute to policy change in their respective countries. Similarly, regional training institutions and programs, such as BCEAO/BEAC Macroeconomic Training, the African Economic

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<sup>‡</sup>Alumni of ACBF-supported training programs include: Head, Western Africa Management Institute (WAMI); CEO of the Sierra Leone Stock Exchange; Deputy Governor Operations, Bank of Zambia (now Senior Advisor at the World Bank); General Manager, Bank of Mozambique; Director of Research, Bank of Namibia; and, Deputy Director of Budget at the Treasury, Republic of South Africa.

Research Consortium (AERC), and the Programme de Troisième Cycle Inter-Universitaire (PTCI) have contributed significantly to the scaling up of economic policy analysis management, while developing institutional leaders across sub-Saharan Africa (ACBF, 2009:5). Worth special mention here, is the ACBF-funded African Economic Research Consortium – Collaborative Masters Program (AERC-CMAP), which provides postgraduate training in economics to students from all sub-Saharan Africa. Today, CMAP alumni account for over 40% of the faculty of the Department of Economics at Makerere University, Uganda; University of Dar-es Salaam, Tanzania; Eduardo Modlane University, Mozambique; and the University of Malawi. Furthermore, the Head of Department of National University of Lesotho and Swaziland, and more than 60% of their faculty are alumni of CMAP. The program again, was instrumental in the establishment of the Department of Economics at University of Namibia with most of the pioneering staff members being alumni of CMAP (ACBF, 2007).

While this paper is not proposing a panacea or silver bullet solution to the issue of

institutional leadership, there are a number of actions that it recommends to employ for leadership capacity development in African universities. Based on past experiences, the following examples are put forward as strategies to enhance institutional leadership:

- *Development of a forum to engage in continuing dialogue on issues of leadership development* – AAU's university leadership and management training workshops under SUMA (Senior University Management Workshops) program can be cited as an excellent example in institutional leadership development;
- *ACU electronic briefing on higher education developments for Vice-Chancellors in the ACU family* – is another meaningful avenue through which institutional leadership is being developed across the continent;
- *Strengthened partnerships with African and global knowledge centres* – ACBF partnership with AAU's (i.e. the Association of African Universities' Capacity Development Program for the Revitalization of African Higher Education Institutions (AAU-CADRE)) is another such example. Through this

collaboration, AAU-CADRE is building the leadership and management capacity of African Higher Education Institutions to improve their performance in the core areas of teaching, research and community services using innovative solutions to problems facing these institutions;

- *Institutional mentoring and coaching* – ACBF's Economic Policy Management Programs (EPMs) and the ACBF-funded African Economic Research Consortium's Collaborative PhD Program in Economics (AERC-CPP) each have a built-in internship program aimed at mentoring and coaching beneficiaries for future leadership roles in the private and public sectors. Students have benefited from mentoring and coaching initiative with institutions such as the World Trade Organization in Geneva, Switzerland; the IZA in Bonn, Germany; the Bank of Canada; the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the Fund's Economist Program; and the World Bank. The programs in fulfillment of one of their strategic objectives have become a source of developing institutional leadership both in the

public and private sectors in Africa;

- *Ensuring that the work environment supports a leadership learning culture that attracts and retains good leaders* – ACBF's partnership programs actively promote good governance, a work environment that supports a leadership learning culture, attracts and retains good leaders, and encourages peer-learning and experience sharing as a way to enhance leadership capacity and efficiency in the work place;
- *Creating recognition programs to develop exemplary leadership* – in this regard, the ACBF actively seeks out champions of institutional leadership as part of its partnership programs with African universities;
- *Establishment of networks* – The AAU Research and Education Network (REN), established with support from the ACBF, the Partnership for Higher Education (PHEA) and the International Development and Research Council (IRDC) is yet another tool that seeks to enhance institutional leadership across African universities. REN, amongst others, acts as a

clearing house on research and education networking and ICT policy;

- *Recognition programs for exemplary leadership* – in this regard, the ACBF actively seeks out champions of institutional leadership as part of ACBF's Senior Policymakers and Knowledge-sharing Program to acknowledge their contributions to the African continent. Amongst the eminent persons who have participated in this innovative program are: Ms. Evelyn Herfkens, former Executive Director of the UN Millennium Campaign and Minister of Development Cooperation, the Netherlands; Ambassador Vijay S. Makhani, former Assistant Secretary General of the OAU & Interim Commissioner of the African Union; Amb. Christina Svensson, former Swedish Ambassador to Malawi, Mauritius, Zambia & Zimbabwe; Dr. Callisto Madavo, former Vice President, Africa Region, The World Bank; and, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Manager, The World Bank;
- *Promotion of Open Access* – such an initiative will again foster better access to knowledge and information across universities

and institutions of higher learning; and

- *Create environments for entrepreneurship and learning in universities*– African universities need new institutional strategies and decision-making processes that privilege learning and entrepreneurship to enable such institutions survive and prosper.

In addition to the above-bulleted list, there is the need to develop the behavioural skills of leaders and focus on self-improvement; a need for skill development for managing under different risk scenarios; and the need to promote research on effective pedagogical tools.

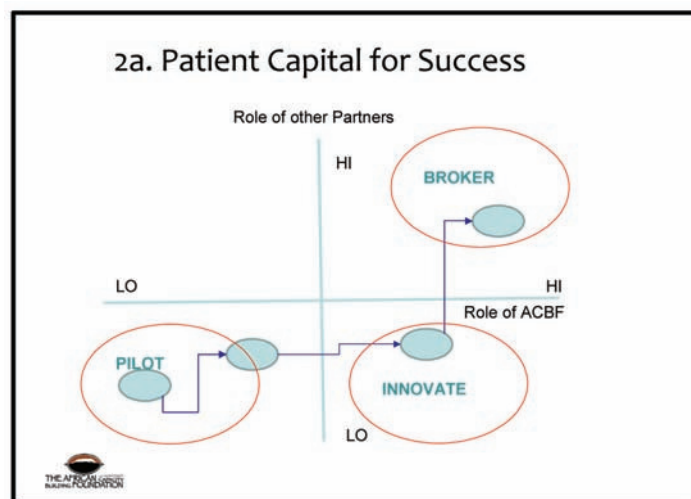
In operationalizing its capacity development support to African universities, ACBF has uncovered a couple of unique models that yield results, namely: a) patient capital for success, and b) partnership for policy and learning. These models come from the long-term practice of the Foundation of working with “strategic nodes of entry” for its activities. Such entry nodes include a cadre of individuals who end up taking leadership positions in society or undertake responsibilities for managing complex policy change

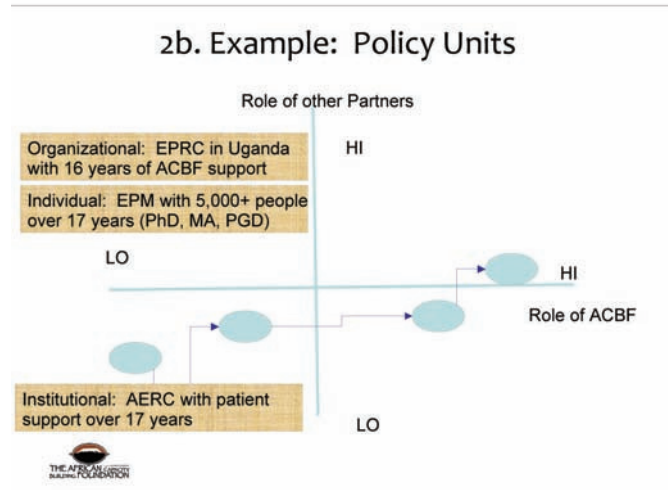
processes in their organizations and countries. Other entry nodes are dynamic learning institutions, such as universities that are taking a lead role in society. Entry nodes at the institutional level include associations of universities or sub-regional entities responsible for education policy or knowledge networks that are spearheading knowledge creation and sharing on important thematic areas in the country. These models are described in more detail below.

#### a) Patient capital for success model:

In this model, the Foundation employs patient capital over a number of years to take nascent institutions to scale and visibility (figures 2a and 2b). A typical intervention of the Foundation

starts off with a small pilot which is funded over a number of years (about 4). Successful pilots are then funded to seek innovative models of capacity development. When innovations are visible, other partners join in the initiative and bring it to scale. At this stage the Foundation focuses on seeking opportunities to broker new forms of financing or co-financing and sustainable forms of support to the initiative. There are various examples where this model is applied. The EPM program is an example at the individual level. This initiative now has a cadre of 5,000+ graduates at the PhD, PGD, or MA level in economic policy. In some countries and organizations the graduates from these programs make up to 30% of the civil service, creating a real opportunity for transformational





change in the countries in which they work.

At the organizational level there is the case of the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) in Uganda, which is a policy unit that has enjoyed 16 years of support from ACBF and is now well known and sourced by both government and donor entities. At the institutional level the example that is a good illustration of this model is AERC, which has enjoyed patient capital to do research, studies, and training in economic policy for over 17 years.

### **b) Partnerships for Policy and Learning:**

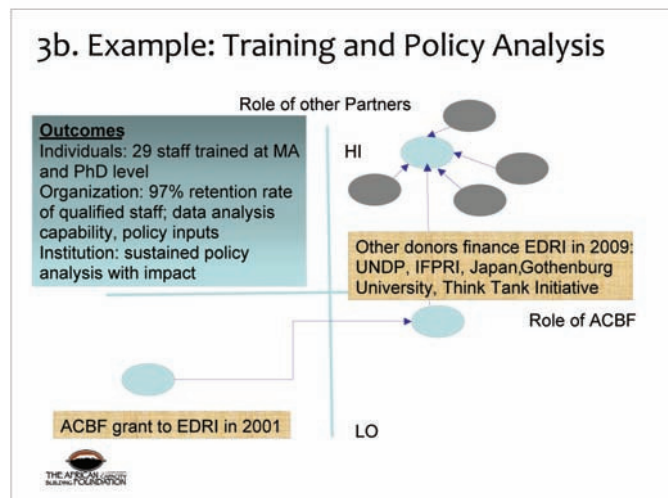
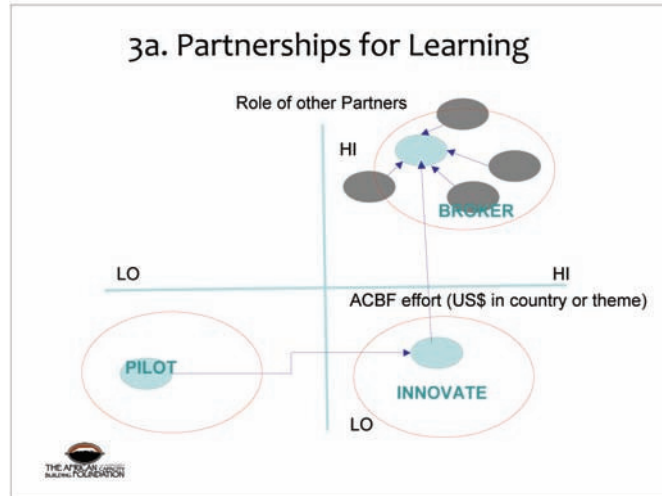
This model involves ACBF piloting with nascent organizations, supporting them over a number

of years, bringing them to higher capacity and visibility until they are picked up for financing by other donors (figure 3a)

At this stage, ACBF joins in and partners with others to bring results to a higher scale through jointly supporting these entities. There are a number of examples in the area of policy and learning, such as the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI) in Ethiopia (See Figure 3b overleaf).

ACBF made a small grant in 2001 to EDRI which was a little known entity doing policy analysis and training. By 2009, the EDRI had attracted financing from donors such as UNDP, IFPRI, Japan, Gutenberg University, and the Think-Tank Initiative





by the Gates Foundation and IDRC. A number of outcomes are visible from this model: (a) at the individual level EDRI has trained 28 staff at the MA or PhD level; and (b) at the organizational level, EDRI has seen a 97% retention rate of qualified staff, which can carry out effective data analysis,

and have capability to influence national policy.

The foregoing suggestions and models should be viewed as a starting point to transforming African universities' leadership capacity. As noted earlier, the scope of the subject at hand cannot be

captured in its full diversity and complexity in a brief presentation. Nonetheless, the paper submits that serving beyond the predictable entails new capacities, new insights and new knowledge that both complement and transform what has come before. These are essential to assist the leadership of African universities to anticipate, innovate and adapt. In our opinion, doing so, will enable the leadership of African universities reduce the magnitude and frequency of crises, mitigate negative impacts, seize opportunities and thrive in the face of an ever-changing landscape (Bourgon 2009; ACBF 2007; Miller 2005). As Miller (2005) further posits, it is imperative to empower, challenge and motivate institutional leaders to be visionaries, initiators, effective communicators and decision-makers, capable of responding proactively to the challenges of today's society. Developing the leadership capacity to detect emerging trends and anticipate significant changes by a few years or even a few months, gives one an invaluable comparative advantage. It empowers the institutions to take proactive steps to prevent, preempt or change the course of potentially negative events toward more favourable outcomes (Bourgon, 2009).

## **CONCLUSION**

The paper has sought to highlight the situation of institutional leaders in African universities. In so doing, the paper submits that the challenges African universities face today, including the shift toward a knowledge-based society, and from a national to a global economy, call for creative solutions and a new leadership. A leadership that is conversant with the behaviour of complex adaptive systems and able to make effective decisions under different strategic and risk scenarios. To this end, Africa critically needs leaders who are vested with strong interpersonal skills, who are politically astute, economically savvy, business aware and who use their emotional intelligence to lead universities into the post-modern era.

There is thus an urgent need to remake African universities in the image of the Continent's highest aspirations such that these universities become not only the envy of others but, more importantly, the engines of African renaissance. This requires, for instance, attracting top-notch faculty, investing in technology, and embracing cutting-edge knowledge and knowledge tool kits. For

this to occur, African universities should take responsibility for the poor quality of the current leadership, and recognize their considerable potential in producing new and transformative leaders able to provide effective solutions to some of Africa's most pressing problems.

The leadership of African universities need not only have a good grasp of the essential elements driving their decisions, but also have to be prepared with the right set of values and behaviours. ACBF's collaboration with African universities is geared in this direction to transform the universities into instruments of change and excellence, as well as build leadership capacity. This effort, which should be a shared and collective responsibility, should be pursued and scaled up for a meaningful contribution to the resolution of the continent's development challenges.

By virtue of their important role, African universities today are uniquely placed as a result of uptake of knowledge management, strengthened private-public partnerships and advances in ICT to enhance institutional leadership to trigger the change. To this end, African universities should take

the lead to reposition themselves as the repositories of new ideas and exchange of knowledge such that the quiet force of the collective efforts unleash the spring of new approaches to sustainable development, good governance, and innovation. ACBF, being a strong institution for capacity development in a fragile continent, believes that it is critical to support the emergence, development, and scaling up of solutions to institutional leadership in African universities and the ACBF's experience shows that there are models to do so.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

**Dr. Kobena Hanson** is the Head, Knowledge and Learning Department, ACBF. Prior to joining ACBF in 2006, Kobena was the Knowledge Management Coordinator, Ghana SHARP Project; a USAID-funded, Futures Group-implemented KM Country initiative for Ghana. Dr. Hanson also taught at West Virginia University, Morgantown, USA. He holds a B.A. in Geography & Resources Development from the University of Ghana (1989); an M.A. in Population Studies from the United Nations Regional Institute for Population Studies, University of Ghana (1992);

a PGD in Population & Development (Distinction) from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague (1994); and a Ph.D. in Geography from Queens University, Canada (2001). Dr. Hanson has published a number of critical articles on livelihood strategies and social networking in top-tier development policy and geography journals.

**Dr. Frannie Léautier** is the Executive Secretary, African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). A Tanzanian national, she served as Vice President of the World Bank and Head of the World Bank Institute from December 2001 to March 2007. She also served as Chief of Staff to the former President of the World Bank from 2000-2001. Cumulatively, Dr. Léautier served in various capacities at the World Bank from 1992-2007. From 2007 - 2009, she was a Managing Partner at The Fezemat Group, a company focused on risk management and leadership development. Dr. Léautier holds a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of Dar es Salaam (1984); a Master of Science in Transportation from MIT (1986); and a Ph.D. in Infrastructure Systems from MIT (1990). She is also a graduate of the Harvard University Executive

Development Program. Dr. Léautier has published a number of articles in top-tier economic journals and magazines; she has also edited three books, including a recent one on *Cities in a Globalizing World*. She is currently Founding Editor for the *Journal of Infrastructure Systems*, Advisory Board Member for the MIT Open Course Ware, and Secretary of the Board for the Nelson Mandela Institute for Science and Technology in Africa. Dr. Léautier is a charter member of the Advisory Board for *EuropEFE* and a founding Board member for the Africa Institute for Governing with Integrity.

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## Annex I: ACBF Support to Tertiary Institutions in sub-Saharan Africa – 1992 to 2008

Year	Project/Program	Interventional Area	Funding (US\$ 000)	Cumulative Total (US\$ 000)
1992	AERC-CMAP I	Training of Professional Economists	5,000	
			5,000	5,000
1993	McGill	Economic Policy Analysts & Managers	2,136	
			2,136	7,136
1994	PTCI	Training of Professional Economists	5,000	
			5,000	12,136
1997	AERC-CMAP Phase II	Training of Professional Economists	3,000	
	EPM, Cameroon	Economic Policy Analysts & Managers	2,000	
	EPM, Cote d'Ivoire	-do-	2,000	
	EPM, Ghana	-do-	2,000	
	EPM, Uganda	-do-	2,000	
			11,000	23,136
2000	CESAG	Financial Managers	1,500	
	IEF	Financial Managers	3,000	
	PTCI Phase II	Training of Professional Economists	4,000	
	SARIPS	Policy Analysts	1,500	
	UNAM-MPPA	Public Policy Analysts	850	
			10,850	33,986
2001	AERC-CMAP Phase III	Training of Professional Economists	3,000	
			3,000	36,986
2002	AERC-PhD	Training of Professional Economists	2,000	
	EPM, Cameroon Phase II	Economic Policy Analysts & Managers	2,000	
	EPM, Cote d'Ivoire Phase II	-do-	2,000	
	EPM, Ghana Phase II	-do-	2,000	
	EPM, Uganda Phase II	-do-	2,000	
			10,000	46,986
2004	CMAAE	Professional Agricultural Economists	2,200	
	MRUTP		2,000	
	PSMTP, Africa University	Public Sector Management	3,000	
	PSMTP ENA, Dakar	-do-	3,000	
	PSMTP GIMPA, Ghana	-do-	3,000	
	PSMTP, Libreville	-do-	3,000	
			16,200	63,186
2005	AAU	Institutional Strengthening	2,800	
	AERC-CMAP, Phase IV	Training of Professional Economists	3,000	
	CAFRAD		700	
	CODESRIA	Institutional Strengthening	1,100	
			7,600	70,786
2006	CESAG Phase II	Financial Managers	1,500	
	EPM, Cameroon, Phase III	Economic Policy Analysts & Managers	2,500	
	EPM, Cote d'Ivoire Phase III	-do-	2,500	
	EPM, Ghana Phase III	-do-	2,500	
	EPM, Uganda Phase III	-do-	2,500	
	NPTCI	Training of Professional Economists	8,000	
	MBFM	Financial Managers	1,500	
	CIFAL, Durban		1,006.3	
	CIFAL, Ouagadougou		993.7	
	WUA		2,500	
	PEARL Africa University		800	
			26,300	97,086
2007	AERC-PhD Phase II	Training of Professional Economists	3,500	
	EPM, Congo (DRC)	Economic Policy Analysts & Managers	2,500	
	EPM, Mozambique	-do-	2,200	
	EPM, Zambia	-do-	2,000	
			10,200	107,286
TOTAL (92-07)				107,286

Source: I. ACBF Annual Reports, 2000-2008