

IAU 2017 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
THEME: LEADERSHIP FOR A CHANGING PUBLIC-PRIVATE HIGHER
EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

ADDRESS BY Professor Kwesi Yankah
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ON BEHALF OF HIS EXCELLENCY
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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

University of Ghana

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Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana,
President of the International Association of Universities,
Leaders of Higher Education from all over the world,
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Intro

It gives me enormous pleasure to be here this morning, on behalf of our indefatigable President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, who conveys his apologies and attends today to similar engagements. Indeed, welcoming the International Association of Universities to Ghana is an honour to this country, and signals our acceptance within the bracket of eminent university institutions in the global village.

I am even more delighted learning that this is the first time the IAU is holding such a meeting in Ghana, and the first time in Sub-Saharan Africa, outside of South Africa.

Ghana Factor

Your choice of Ghana this particular time, on our 50th anniversary evokes crucial antecedents to the historic struggle for the liberation of Africa, when this country made a historic move in 1957 that had a ripple effect on the total liberation of the entire continent.

More importantly this forum takes place at a time the world still celebrates Ghana at one of its finest moments in history, when we have further consolidated our democracy not with street protests, not in turbulence, but in fair weather.

The choice of Ghana then must be a vote for peace, stability, and democracy, indeed a vote for an auspicious climate that yields academic excellence.

And in the University of Ghana, the venue for this conference, IAU could not have chosen a better site, particularly to expatiate a theme for which this University is noted. Your theme of Leadership in higher education, takes one back to 1948, when this University along with Ibadan, blazed the trail in the establishment of Universities in the sub- region, and subsequently produced two of Ghana's democratic headships, including our current president, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo.

Legon

For me personally, it is always great to be back home to Legon, (and to this Great Hall), whose high profile naturally robs on all who were delivered under the Great Tower of Learning, and eventually got a handshake whose fragrance

still lingers. As an academic now wearing the garment of a policy maker, I am still learning how to maintain my equilibrium. The bottom line being that I am presumed to now be in an uncomfortable position, where I am challenged to address all the lapses. I once screamed about educational policies, while I was on the other side of the podium. It is a kind of, here you are: *“if you really claim to be a skillful fetish priest, here now is your chance: let's see your dance”*: *kom mayenhwe*. [expressed in Akan language]

Leadership

The happy truth is that Ghana has been blessed with a restless leader, a new President, who is simply turned on, indeed animated by the word, 'education,' recognizing the enormous impact of a country's human capital on its development, and on the global output. This conference then puts us in a privileged position to understand current trends in the global higher education space from key and active stakeholders like your good selves, allowing us to benchmark our efforts in Ghana here, against to global standards.

Nearly 70 years after its establishment as a University College, Legon has worked diligently to earn enough trust across the globe to attract considerable internationalization. With an international student population that represents some 40 countries dotted around the globe, and countless scholarly exchange deals, signed with universities worldwide, Ghana's premier university rides the crest wave, and is more than qualified to host the International Association of Universities. Indeed most of the member countries of the IAU are likely to have their students in this university or other sister universities in the country.

Global Community

The existence of an International Association of Universities, clearly implies the presence of an interconnected world and a global research community, where

the standard of a country's intellectual output and resources naturally affect the total output, whether positively or otherwise. But an IAU consisting of universities that are big and small in stature, and coming from countries with highly contrastive wealth profiles, also facilitates dialogues on issues of common concern, that enable consensus to be reached on acceptable international standards and quality assurance policies. But this also compels the adoption of best practices in academia.

In our globalized world today, where healthcare, food security, climate change, and of course, education, fiercely compete for attention and state funding, rising expenditures and economic downturns are bound to lead to a general decline in state resources. It is not surprising that the slice of resources available to fund higher education, has diminished across the globe. The ripple effect on local economies is obvious and has constrained governments the world over to pull-back on public spending, challenging nations to discover innovative ways of revenue generation for nation building.

Those are the reasons I find particularly timely, the theme for the IAU 2017 International conference, *Leadership for a changing public-private higher education landscape*.

Funding Higher Education in Ghana

The trajectory of funding Higher Education in Ghana and in many African countries can be traced to the colonial era, where there was an obvious need to train pioneering civil servants and technicians to fill the gap created by the departure of the colonial masters. There was the need then to develop the needed human capital for national development. Government at the time virtually provided funding to cover staff emoluments, administration facilities,

capital expenditure and students' maintenance. Indeed, students themselves enjoyed allowances for self-sustenance.

Over the years however, funding for Higher or Tertiary Education in Ghana has seen several policy changes including the introduction of students' loan schemes and other innovative cost sharing measures, driven by the need to reduce the cost burden on Government.

In 1997, a landmark cost-sharing arrangement was reached under which 70 percent of funding would come from the Government with the remaining 30 percent distributed equally between three sources: internal revenue generation, private .donations and student's contribution.

This development saw the introduction of Academic Facilities User Fees (AFUF) and Residential Facilities User Fees (RFUF) in tertiary institutions. The Ministry of Education, the Ghana National Council for Tertiary Education and the Universities agreed that under no circumstances, however, should annual fee increases, exceed 100% per annum. And this has not changed to date, primarily for Public Universities.

In 2000, Ghana once again initiated a sustainable funding policy which added two and half percent to the country's Value Added Tax on sales of goods and services, ostensibly earmarked to support tertiary institutions in the area of grants, scholarships and infrastructure. This was the GETFUND, the Ghana Education Trust Fund, which has supported universities and other tertiary institutions over the years, but has come under stress due to increased access to tertiary education, and the establishment of several new universities.

Happily, various universities have dipped into internally generated funds and have supported needy but brilliant students with scholarships, and other facilities.

Private Universities

In the last two decades, Ghana and again in many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa are witnessing a rapid growth in tertiary education within the private sector. Beyond providing access for qualified students who could not be admitted by public tertiary education institutions due to limited facilities and infrastructure, private Universities raised the level of competition in admissions to tertiary institutions, and offered alternative educational opportunities and pathways that inure to differentiation and diversification of tertiary education. Enrolments in private universities in Ghana constitute about 20% of total enrolments in tertiary education. The funding of Private tertiary education institutions is mainly through tuition and related fees paid by students. Support provided by the state to private institutions has been limited, but will soon be reviewed in accordance with the Act that set up the GETFUND. Similarly, support from the private sector, currently limited is also expected to increase.

Loans and Research Support

Other policies to ensure a robust and expanding higher education environment in Ghana include the Students Loan Trust, which gives students access to soft loans to further their education at the tertiary level. Government also plans to boost faculty research by establishing a National Research Fund, to provide funds to support and promote research in universities primarily targeted at the nation's strategic priorities. As a reflection of the changing funding landscape, private institutions in Ghana also have access to the National Research Fund, whose act is currently before Parliament. This of

course will be instituted alongside allowances for books and research already given to faculty in universities.

Budget Priorities

Overall, the nation's prioritization of the education sector, can be seen in the share of education in national budget. The education sector over the past five years has received between 20 and 27% of the national budget, representing 6 to 8% of Ghana's GDP. The world average of expenditure on education as a percentage of total budgets is 21% representing 4.70% of GDP (2013). Ghana's 6 to 8% of GDP, then places the nation above world averages, and in the bracket of countries Finland and Kenya.

Ghana has generally spent more on education as a percentage of GDP as compared to other countries in the ECOWAS or West Africa sub- region, and operates above the ECOWAS average of 4.3% of GDP.

In the area of Government expenditure on the tertiary education subsector, tertiary has often received 20-23% of the education budget, representing about 1.5% of GDP.

To make such a statement about impressive educational expenditures, is however, not to express satisfaction about the educational outcomes; for countries like South Korea and Singapore spend much lesser percentages of their GDP on education, but the global impact of their education on development and wealth creation, is evident. It is simply not a game of expenditures; it is a game of content, quality and learning outcomes.

Policy Change

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, Universities Since time immemorial, have largely been the solution centres for the myriad of problems confronting the world, offering answers to cope with complex challenges, and giving insights into the past, the present and the future in all human endeavours. It is in recognition of this complex role played by institutions of higher education, that easy access to tertiary education has been deliberately enshrined in Ghana's Constitution. "Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular, by progressive introduction of free education" and further in Article 38(1) that "the State shall provide educational facilities at all levels and in all the Regions of Ghana, and shall, to the greatest extent feasible, make those facilities available to all citizens."

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the Government of HE Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, firmly believes that this equitable access to higher education begins from basic through the secondary level, which is a crucial stepping-stone to accessing tertiary education. If enrollment in tertiary education should increase to have ripple effect on national development, this cannot be fulfilled if access to secondary or high school education is constrained by means or affordability. To him, free access to high quality secondary or high school education is the least Ghana can offer to young boys and girls, our future leaders.

The Government in the past few weeks has brought smiles to the faces of parents, guardians and students alike with a new Free Senior High School

policy, which also adds free meals, free text books and virtually enables a poor parent to walk their child to school, and see them off only with a smile, and a wave.

The bold policy is indeed considered as perhaps the most significant policy development in education, in Ghana's post-independence history; and the impact so far has been monumental.

Overnight, Ghana's skyline has changed, and parents have suddenly regained their freedom to breathe, plus the audacity of hope. And what does this mean for tertiary education? It means a stupendous increase in the Gross Enrollment Ratio in universities as from the 2019/2020 academic year. Most importantly for this conference, it means any money saved by parents or guardians from the free senior high school education, can then be applied to funding the child's tertiary education.

It is clear of course that our current funding models for both public and private higher education in Ghana are not sustainable. Indeed, while government cannot continue to wholly foot the bill for higher education in the public sector, private institutions can also not continue to solely rely on tuition fees, as the two models have serious implications for the mandate and overall output of higher education.

Skewed Global Partnerships

As I wind up on this opening address, let me draw attention to the benefits I expect to accrue from this conference by the International Association of Universities taking place in Ghana, in Sub Saharan Africa.

This meeting by IAU, will perhaps achieve its optimal effect if innovative ideas in funding tertiary education are tabled for discussion at the various fora. But the conference outcomes should also reckon with the overall financial implications of networking within such an association made up of a diversity of nations and universities of varying global prominence.

The expected outcomes could be partly envisioned in Africa's placement trends in global migration, within the education sector. In the area of academic migration of students worldwide, it is significant Africa has been projected as a site to watch for student mobility across the globe, after India. African students are estimated to be 10% of the world's international students. And which are the typical destinations for academic migration by Africans? France has been cited as the foremost destination for Africans, followed by South Africa, then UK or USA. UK and USA absorb about 90/0 each of African Students in motion.

Reasons for Migration

African students have sought university education abroad sometimes to widen their intellectual and social horizon. At the graduate level, however, students have sought to make themselves more competitive for the job market, and tend to think that education abroad would give them a competitive edge, as well as access to a prosperous global job market.

Where study abroad is through institutional MOUs, shorter periods of stay have been the expected norm, for such MOU's offer sandwich opportunities, where students spend up to a year abroad, and return home to complete their academic work, obtaining the local degree. Where individual arrangement has been made for study abroad, African students spend full terms obtaining a degree either at the undergraduate or post graduate level.

The situation however changes with student mobility from other continents to Africa. Whether mobility is through formal or individual arrangement, North-South mobility to Africa is significantly for shorter periods, and no effort is made to obtain a degree from a sub-Saharan African University for a student coming from other continents outside Africa.

Foreign students from US, Europe etc. who come to Ghana and other African countries to do graduate or doctoral work, come mostly as visiting students, who get affiliated with the University while doing field work in Ghana, and take the opportunity to use the University library, and consult faculty in relevant fields of expertise. Hardly is Africa accessed for full term graduate education.

Flash Visits

In a few unusual cases, Euro-American Universities seeking a taste of Africa, have brought down their own instructors to teach their students on the African soil and return. Here no intellectual resources in Africa are used. Africa is regrettably used as a class site, and nothing else.

On the other hand, where foreign students immigrate from other African countries, they enroll as full-time students, take entire courses over 4 year periods if they are undergraduates, and receive the degrees of the relevant African university.

This skewed pattern of student and scholar mobility, or rather the inequitable pattern of scholarly exchange, should be of concern in international forums such as this. If funding of higher education is our concern here, we should also be interested in outcomes of academic mobility that make richer countries even richer, and poorer countries poorer. It is of course to be expected, as I was told recently, that Higher

Education is for example Britain's no 1 foreign exchange earner, and the No 3 in Australia.

Perception of Low Standards

But why should students from other continents, spend full terms in Africa earning a degree, when global rankings in higher education, dismally portray Universities in Africa?

I recently returned from a conference in Oxford where Oxford was virtually jubilating on their placement as the Number One University in the world, in the current university rankings.

What is the story of African Universities on global rankings? First, of the six continents of Africa, Europe, Asia, North America, South America, Australia, Africa is the only continent not represented in neither the best 100, nor the best 200 nor the best 300 universities in the world. All others, Australia, North America, South America, Asia, Europe, are represented.

The No 1 University in Africa, is placed in world rankings as No. 303. The number 1 university in Sub Saharan Africa is also ranked as No. 1032 in the world. The University that ranks number 100 in Africa, is ranked globally as number 3419.

Ghana's own No 1 university is ranked 1983 globally, and our 4th placed in Ghana, which is a highly respected university, is however ranked No. 5835. Only 7 universities in Africa fall within the best 1000 universities in the world.

Caveat

Even though the worldwide rankings are not necessarily the most reliable in measuring academic standards, the geographical distribution of universities in the top, middle, and bottom brackets, should give one a sense of considerable inequality between universities in Africa, and the rest of the world. Within Africa itself there is a sharp schism in perceived standards, between universities in South Africa and Northern Africa on one hand, and those in the typical sub-Saharan Africa, described as North of the Limpopo river. The latter are poorly perceived and placed in terms of infrastructure, human resources, and academic output.

The limited academic migration to Sub Saharan African universities, should clearly then be seen within the broad global perceptions, which also feed into the general architecture of migration.

It is our wish that this conference deliberates on skewed migration patterns and resolves to take steps necessary to bring about greater balance and equity, through higher levels of institutional marketing by African universities outside the continent, as well as the opening up of centers of global studies on other continents, for networking with the Africa world.

Conclusion

Above all, let the IAU revise its policies, and enable more and African universities to both enroll as members, as well as afford participation in conferences. Let such policies ensure maximum participation by host communities through the application of differential rates of enrollment and registration. How meaningful is an international conference after all, if the host community registers the lowest representation?

But African universities themselves should work harder to advertise themselves in the global village; for Africa has a huge potential in Higher Education which has been exploited only superficially.

Knowledge is indeed the most inexhaustible resource any country can ever possess, as well as secure. Let this historic conference by TAU on an African soil, trigger dialogues and actions, that will progressively narrow the Intellectual gap between Africa and the World.

I take this opportunity then to formally open this conference even as I wish you fruitful deliberations in the next few days.

Please enjoy the Ghanaian hospitality which we roll out 365 days in the year.
Thank you.

