

## Enhanced internationalisation and marketisation as sustainability ventures for universities in Nigeria, sub-Saharan Africa

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### Abstract

*This study examined internationalisation and marketisation strategies as sustainability ventures for universities in Nigeria and the Sub-Saharan African region in general. Universities in Sub-Saharan Africa have in recent times been confronted with the challenges of globalisation – a worldwide social, economic and political integration, greatly powered by the evolution of technology. The inability of these institutions to completely stand up to these challenges has impeded their quest towards greater sustainability. A larger percentage of universities in the region lag behind globally in terms of rankings. Considering the significance of university internationalisation and marketisation in sustaining higher education efforts, which Nigerian universities have not adequately exploited; it becomes necessary to review selected best practices and earmark a framework of enhanced internationalisation and marketisation strategies as sustainability ventures to imbibe. The review is anchored on the globalisation theory and the five capital model of sustainability. It adopts a post-positivist qualitative methodology, whereby document review and inductive analyses of existing literature and related secondary sources of information are exploited. The review is hinged on the tri-function (teaching-learning, research and outreach) of universities and the contextual borrowing approach in policy studies. It was evident that we live in a dispensation where no university system can work in isolation. Consequently, stakeholders of Nigerian and Sub-Saharan African Universities have the responsibility to adopt innovative/ICT management systems, adequate research capacity, transformational Leadership and quality assurance practices, that render the universities globally competitive.*

**Keywords:** Internationalisation, Marketisation, Sustainability venture, Universities, Sub-Saharan Africa

### Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria in particular is currently faced with the increasing challenges of adapting to the realities of globalisation and the drive towards sustainable development. It is an era where higher education, through intense human capital development appears to be a key indicator. In this regard, knowledge obtained through higher education increasingly constitutes the basis of nations' competitive advantage through its capacity to improve human capital development and productivity. Consequently, investments in the knowledge base sectors (education and research) of economies around the world are exceeding investments in capital or

physical equipment. Investments in nonmaterial and knowledge base sectors like higher education and research continue to exceed investments in capital equipment and physical infrastructure (OECD, 2009).

The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in Sub-Saharan Africa are key to building knowledge-based economies for the sustainability of the continent. This position is corroborated by African development partners, policy makers and relevant international institutions/organisations like: World Bank, European Union (EU), African Development Bank (AfDB), African Union (AU), Association of African Universities (AAU), and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). According to these stakeholders, HE is strategic and must be properly positioned in the development framework of every African nation (Vargehess, 2013). As the New Africa Magazine (2013) puts it, the importance of HE to the attainment of sustainable development, particularly Africa's Agenda 63, has exposed African Universities as engines of innovation saddled with the responsibility to produce skilled human capital through teaching, research/innovation and community outreach.

Regrettably, the outcome of the economic crisis of the late 1970s on African universities was "resource reduction, adjustment and deterioration of services, facilities and quality" (Akin, 1994). Moreover, political instability in many countries played itself out in university campuses resulting in the closure of universities and eroding of university education. According to Ajayi et al (1996), most Sub-Saharan African universities are themselves somewhat to blame for contributing to the deteriorating quality they suffer from. This is because, in attempting to respond to high demand for space in universities due to rapid increase in student numbers, they have succumbed to the temptation of; admitting low quality students, recruitment of mediocre staff to cope with an ever increasing teaching load and improvisation of physical facilities. To further substantiate this view, Bonuti (2023) empirically notes that the disproportionality in the number of students admitted to available facilities; outdated libraries with limited facilities and majority out-of-date books; limited ICT facilities to serve the growing number of students; and poor and limited access to internet facilities, are among the short falls of higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa which have adversely impacted the quality of higher education. However, since the 1970s post-crisis economic recovery, many African nations have gradually been able to exploit HE internationalisation and marketisation partnerships and opportunities like the Bologna Process to make new strides in the development of their university systems (Clay, 2016).

Nigeria, as an African giant with the largest economy and the potential to produce the largest skilled human capital across the continent (Adedeji & Campbell, 2013) stands in a better position to provide continental leadership in quality University Education. As an engine of innovation and developer of the much-needed skilled human capital, the Nigerian University system, through decisive policies and institutional reforms championed by the National University Commission (NUC), ought to be a reflective example for young scholars around Africa and beyond. In an era of globalisation and the drive towards sustainability, Universities in the country have the responsibility to not only avoid localising their operations within Nigeria and engage in international institutional partnerships, exchange and collaboration programs

that put the country's institutions within an international space and within a committee of reputable global universities. They must be seen to also engage in robust marketization of these institutions through the production of quality, productive and competitive graduates and services from their teaching, research/innovation and community outreach activities.

## **Research Methods**

The study is a conceptual post-positivist qualitative review. It makes use of document review and analyses of existing literature and related secondary sources of information to examine concepts, underlying issues, success stories/best practices and proposes a framework of enhanced strategies for university internationalisation and marketization as sustainability ventures for Nigerian and by extension Sub-Saharan African universities. On this basis, the study examines the concepts of university internationalisation, marketisation and sustainability. It captures sustainability issues at stake within the Nigerian university system and by extension Sub-Saharan Africa, and explores a series of best practices in internationalisation and marketisation strategies as sustainability ventures for universities in Nigeria and Sub-Sahara Africa as a whole. The study is theoretically underpinned by the globalisation theory and the five capitals model of sustainability, and inductively argues within the tri-function (teaching, research and outreach) of universities and the contextual policy borrowing approach. The study proposes a framework of enhancement strategies for internationalisation and marketisation within the tri-function of universities and makes recommendations for policy adoption and direction.

### **Internationalisation, marketisation and sustainability in university education**

#### ***University Internationalisation***

University internationalisation, also known as the internationalisation of higher education, is the integration of international, intercultural, or globalisation dynamics and dimensions into the objectives, functions and delivery of higher education (Knight, 2004; Sue, 2011). It is the commercialisation of research and university education, and the promotion of international competition in the hiring of foreign quality staff and the recruitment of students from affordable, wealthy and privileged countries and families. The aim is to generate revenue, secure national profile, and build international reputation, with the main components being; recruitment of international students and staff, development of international branch campuses, students, staff and scholars exchange programs, internationalisation of the curriculum, research and education partnerships between institutions regionally and internationally (Ali, 2014). Other scholars in their definitions emphasise intentionality and making a meaningful contribution to society - "the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to the development of society (Uwe, De Wit, Elspeth & Leask, 2019). Biamba (2020) opines that university

internationalisation involves three interrelated aspects to include; international relationships (between nations), intercultural factors (interactions between people from different cultures within particular countries, communities and institutions), and global factors (worldwide scope). According to Biamba, integrating these three elements into the curriculum provide opportunities for critical stakeholders to develop global awareness, perspectives and intercultural competences.

The rationale driving university internationalisation and include; idealism, instrumentalism and educationalism (Stier, 2004; Knight 2004)). By idealism, internationalisation hopes to create a more democratic, equitable and fair society in the practice of international cooperation amongst nations. Instrumentalism aims to task policy-makers on the development of high-level transparency and mobilisation amongst educational systems, enabling and simplifying the mobility of individuals and the integration of university degrees and grading systems. Through this, university education could be able to boost economies and ensure sustainable development. It is also a platform for the transfer of governments' ideologies and the promotion of transnational corporations. The rationale of instrumentalism requires; universities to meet the global demands of capitalism. Consequently, universities that adopt internationalisation are more likely to promote their country's competitiveness within global academic circles. Finally, university internationalisation from the educationalists' rationale provides a platform for broadening the academic experiences of students and academic staff (Knight, 2004; & Biamba, 2020).

### ***University Marketisation***

Marketisation of universities is the attempt to put the provision of higher education on a market basis, where the demand and supply of students' education, academic research, outreach services and related institutional activities are balanced through the price mechanism (Young, 2002). Marketisation of universities is viewed in most nations as a compromise between privatisation, academic autonomy and state control, as established world leaders call for "freedom from all the shackles of government regulation" (Dill, 2003). From a more comprehensive perspective, Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2010) describes marketisation of university education as the apparent growing role of private costs, in the increasing inequalities between the resources and status of education in different universities, and in the varying experiences of 'consumption' within common systems. In addition to this is the growing role of competition between institutions and a plethora of corporate activity, such as marketing and business planning. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2010) identify five recurring aspects and characteristics of university marketisation which are highly relevant for the institutional analysis of this process;- rational choice decision-making, inter-institutional competition, customer oriented-attitudes, marketing-led management of universities, and the importance of international relations.

Marketisation of universities is guided by a series of rationales. Firstly, agree that the best use of resources is obtained where universities interact directly with students as customers, rather than with the Government or a Government agency acting on

students' behalf (Kwong, 2000; Young, 2002; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2010). This means that university students best know what they want and if they are empowered to act as consumers. Secondly, as the system expands, its costs increase, especially when higher education has relatively limited scope to enhance its efficiency. Due to real or perceived inability and unwillingness of taxpayers to fund an enlarged university system, private partnership becomes necessary if quality is to be maintained. Finally, the benefits of higher education such as higher wages, more satisfying occupational mobility, amongst others are most individually based. Consequently, it becomes fair enough that these individuals contribute a reasonable share to its costs (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2010).

### ***Sustainability***

The concept of sustainability may be seen from different perspectives depending on the discipline in which it is being applied. Contemporary scholars (El-Kamel, 2014; Thwink, 2014; Peterson & Wood, 2015) agree that sustainability is inextricably linked to sustainable development. This includes the imposition of vast new environmental, social, political, and economic controls to ensure resilience. In other words, sustainability is the ability to continue a defined environmental, economic and social behaviour indefinitely (Thwink, 2014). Economic supports a defined level of economic production indefinitely, and social behaviours impact on the ability of the institution system to function indefinitely across various levels of social- wellbeing spheres. The principle of sustainability stands on a tripod of social, environmental and economic indicators (Thwink, 2014; Peterson & Wood, 2015).

The recognition of the interconnection, overlapping and interdependence of these three factors (social, economic and environmental) set the base of the declaration on education for sustainable development (United Nations World Summit, 2005 & Longshurt, 2014). The concept of university sustainability can, therefore, be traced to the United Nations (UN) declaration of 2005. According to UNESCO (2006), rethinking and revising education from nursery to university to include a clear focus of current and future societies on the development of knowledge, skills, perspectives and values related to sustainability were undertaken. This went hand in hand with reviews of existing curricula to develop trans-disciplinary understandings of social, economic and environmental sustainability

Sustainability in higher education can be seen as the integration of principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of HE (UNESCO, 2005; Togo, 2009). The Higher Education Academy (2015) posits that university sustainability provides the necessary enabling environment for students to develop the attributes, behaviours and skills needed to work and live in a way that safeguards environmental, social and economic wellbeing of both present and future generations. It requires a reorientation of HE systems, through large-scale teaching, research and outreach. Thus, achieving sustainability in a university system requires a deliberate moral effort.

Enhanced internationalisation and marketisation as sustainability ventures for Sub-Saharan African universities implies that universities, particularly in Nigeria intentionally ensure the integration of international, intercultural or a global dimension into the in order to enhance quality for present and future students and staff. It also focuses on promoting international competition in the hiring of quality staff, and the recruitment of students from other countries in order to generate additional revenue, secure national profile, and build a strong international reputation. The implication of this is that such a system must be able to independently display characteristics of university marketisation in an era of globalisation.

### **Nigerian Universities and Sustainability Issues at Stake**

The story of post-colonial Nigerian universities is not in any way different from the pathetic story of African Universities (Akin, 1994; Ajayi,1996). . The oil boom of the 1970s resulted in a corresponding expansion of the Nigerian university system. However, the downturn in the nation's economy and the introduction of Structural Adjustment programmes (SAP) by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), led to an appreciable drop in Federal Government subventions to Nigerian universities. Consequently, the country's universities suffered considerably in every domain. Before this decline, institutional structures for monitoring efficiency played an important role in the efforts to maintain academic standards in the country. However, a massive population expansion plagued by mounting characteristics of underdevelopment prompted the country's universities to fail in sustaining healthy growth (Ajayi, 2001; Aina, 2010).

Complex challenges have preoccupied the Nigerian university system from moving towards the path of sustainability. These challenges include increasing student enrollments, brain-drain amongst staff, poor global ranking, unproductive graduates as a result of largely theoretically based programs and low quality and inadequate research output, inadequate funding, and inadequate infrastructure, (Akinyami & Mopelola, 2013; Adeyemi, 2019). These challenges have watered down the Nigerian University system and the quality of higher education.

According to Adeyemi (2019), the Federal Government of Nigeria, by the end of 2018 had approved 160 universities. These included 43 federal universities, 48 state universities and 79 private universities. This number did not include the 113 polytechnics and 47 monotronics,71 colleges of health technology, 153 innovation enterprise institutions, most of which are privately owned; 132 technical colleges, and 82 colleges of education- consisting of 22 federal, 46 under the state's care and 14 privately owned. Despite these many universities and related institutions, world ranking of universities as of 2019 did not see Nigeria amongst the first 1000. The University of Ibadan managed to appear at the 1099th position and no other Nigerian university followed before the 2000 mark (Adeyemi, 2019; Nwamanah, 2019).

Current data from the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (2024) suggest that only two Nigerian Universities (i.e., Covenant University and the

University of Ibadan) appeared among the top 1000 Universities (occupying positions between 801 and 1000) in the world. At the continental level, no Nigerian University made it to the top 10 universities in Africa. This ranking was based on 18 calibrated performance indicators that measure an institution's performance across five areas, notably; teaching, research environment, research quality, industry, and internationalisation. A 2023 ranking of Sub-Saharan African universities based on their impact in addressing some of the toughest challenges in the region in the areas of teaching, research and societal impact shows only one Nigerian university (Covenant University -7<sup>th</sup> position) amongst the top 25 universities in the region.

Despite Nigeria being the most-represented nation in the overall Sub-Saharan African ranking with 37 ranked institutions; the absence of any Nigerian university among the top 800 in the world, top 10 in Africa and represented by only one institution among the top 25 in Sub-Saharan Africa raises worries about the internationalisation, marketisation and visibility of the country's higher education. There is a correlation between the above system challenges and the internationalisation, marketisation and sustainability of higher education (Longshurt, 2014). Consequently, intentional policy efforts to adequately address the outstanding issues within the Nigerian University system may not only greatly improve the internationalisation and marketisation status of the university system but may equally and certainly give it a sustainability portfolio.

### **Theoretical underpinnings for University Internationalisation and Marketisation**

This paper is anchored on two key theoretical foundations - the globalisation theory by Robertson (1987) and the five-capital model of sustainability by Jonathan Porritt, co-founder of Forum for the future (Porritt, 2005).

#### ***Globalisation theory***

Globalisation refers to the growing interconnectedness and interdependence of people and institutions throughout the world. The IMF (2000) identifies the dissemination of knowledge through education and information flow as an aspect of globalisation. Consequently, the massive spread of education and Western oriented norms of learning at all levels in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the widely available schooling are a large part of the globalisation process.

Globalisation theory holds that globalisation is an accelerated compression of the contemporary world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a singular entity. This compression makes the world a single place by virtue of the power of a set of globally diffused ideas that render the uniqueness of societal, ethnic identities and traditions irrelevant except within local contexts and in scholarly discourse. According to Sklair (1997), there had been many globalising tendencies involving events such as the widespread acceptance of germ theory, the rise of transnational agencies concerned with regulation and communication, and an increasingly unified conceptualization of human rights are all processes of globalisation that were already at play. Consequently,

the globalisation theory as put forward by Robertson Roland in 1987 was just an enhancement of a process that was already on course.

Formal education, as a major agency for conveying knowledge, features prominently in the process and theory of globalisation. Early examples of educational globalisation include the spread of global religions, especially Islam and Christianity, and colonialism, which disrupted and displaced indigenous forms of education throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Postcolonial globalising influences of education have taken on more subtle shapes (Epstein, 2010). According to Holger (2001) and Epstein (2010), globalisation does not only have to do with the ties of economic exchange and political agreements that bind nations and societies, but also the shared consciousness of being part of a global system. Such consciousness is not only conveyed through an ever-larger transnational movement of people and information, but most systematically through education and particularly university education. The internationalisation and marketisation process of universities in Sub-Saharan Africa is therefore part and parcel of the globalisation theory and process. The unstoppable transformation of consciousness brought on by globalisation has altered and continues to alter the content and contours of higher education in the country because universities take on an increasingly important role in the process through acts of internationalisation and marketisation.

The globalisation theory has direct implications on university internationalisation and marketisation. Though both globalisation and internationalism are synonymous, internationalisation is under the umbrella of globalisation. The two concepts in the context of HE can be seen as central realities of the influence of the 21<sup>st</sup> century on higher education development. Globalisation leads to internationalisation and marketisation which could transform the image and institutional activities of universities across the world. The interaction between these three processes within the higher education context could bring about intellectual talents, increase balanced economic and scientific potential and improve on the human capital of Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan African countries leading to the sustainable socio-economic growth and development of society.

### *The five capitals model of sustainability*

It was developed in 2005 by Jonathan Porritt, in his book 'Capitalism As If The World Matters'. The model provides a basis for understanding sustainability in terms of the economic concept of wealth creation or 'capital'. The model posits that; any government or organisation has five capitals or stocks to manage to deliver its products or services. These capitals include: - natural (Environmental), social, human, financial and manufactured capitals (Porritt, 2005; Forum for the Future, 2011). A sustainable institution will maintain and where possible enhance these stocks of capital assets rather than deplete or degrade them.

The Forum for the Future (2011) opined that the model illustrates the interconnectedness of the five capitals and the dynamic process through which



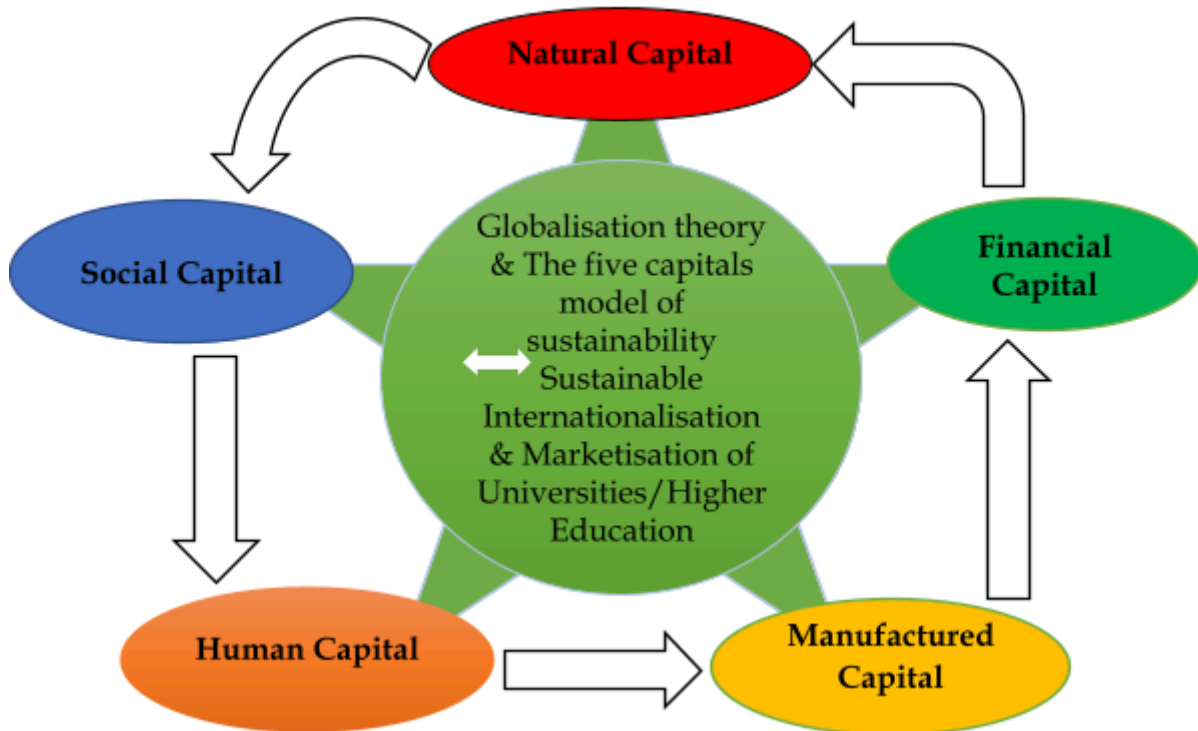
organisations around the world can begin to achieve a balance between their environmental, social and economic needs. The natural capital represents the stock of natural ecosystems that yield a flow of valuable ecosystem goods or services into the future. Social capital stands for the institutions that help in maintaining and developing human capital in partnership with others; e.g. families, communities, businesses, trade unions, schools, and voluntary organisations. Human capital is the stock of skills and knowledge embodied in the ability of the people or citizens to perform different tasks that are used to produce economic value. The manufactured capital is any physical means of production beyond that which can be gathered or found directly in nature and often refers to goods, services, and infrastructures controlled by institutions, organisations or even a nation. Finally, financial Capital is capital in the form of currency, shares and bonds used by individuals and organisations to buy what they need to make their products or provide their services.

### *Globalisation theory in the higher education internationalisation and marketisation*

To build a sustainable higher education system in Nigeria, there must be adequate provision of the five capitals. Natural Capital must be characterised by adequate land and water that will not only host HE infrastructure, but will also be exploited by the HE community in terms of sourcing for food, water, energy, materials, waste disposal and a conducive climate, which are ingredients of human survival in any society. Human Capital – the human resources engaged by the HE system, especially staff and students are expected to be highly knowledgeable and skillful in a state of good health, and must be intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to work towards the attainment of HE objectives. This will increase creativity, meaningful research and innovations, hard work, greater participation and happiness within the system. Social capital – in a SHE system made of all other external stakeholders (parents, communities, government, local and international partners and organisations, schools etc.) must be seen to be collaboratively participating in the development of a HE system that promotes security, inclusion, equity and justice and shared leadership. Through the manufactured capital – the HE system must possess quality and adequate infrastructure in terms of roads, classrooms, offices, laboratories, sporting centers, and transportation facilities, among others. As concerns the financial capital, it is critical and central to the sustainability of the HE system. Through adequate financing, the natural, social, human and manufactured capitals can be properly handled. The quantity of financial capital injected in the HE system influences all other four capitals, which also intend to influence the quality of the output (human capital).

The quality of the output also influences society's ability to influence the generation of additional capitals for redeployment into the system. That is, the ability of a university system to be effective in its mission of building human resources for socio economic development is also determined by the quality and quantity of natural, social, human, manufactured and financial capitals injected into the system.

Figure 1 below is an integrated illustration of globalisation theory and the five capitals model in the context of internationalisation and marketisation of higher education as sustainability ventures.



Source: Ngwa and Yuni (2023)

**Figure 1:** Integrated illustration of the globalisation theory & five capitals model of sustainability

An integration of globalisation theory and the five capitals model of sustainability in the internationalisation and marketisation of universities as seen in figure 1 shows a mutually beneficial relationship. University internationalisation and Marketisation as a process and product of globalisation theory is a sustainability venture for the university system – as it (IM) contributes to building the five capitals of sustainability for a sustainable university system. Equally, the five capitals of sustainability within the university system act as potential boosters to university internationalisation and marketisation. Consequently, enhanced internationalisation and marketisation strategies for Nigerian universities are sustainability ventures for the university system; and a sustainable Nigerian university system constitutes an attractive base for the internationalisation and marketisation of Universities.

### **Some Success Stories of UIM in Sub-Saharan Africa**

In the face of increased internationalisation and marketisation of universities, a good number of African universities and higher education systems have been able to key into global higher education networks that foster contextual harmonisation of academic programs, academic corporation and excellence amongst university systems across the world; thereby ensuring sustainability. The Bologna process for instance, though originally aimed at promoting higher education internationalisation and marketisation within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), has grown to be amongst the largest networks in internationalisation and marketisation around the world.

Perhaps the most important and impactful gains of the Bologna process to African universities has been the funding and mobility partnerships between the European Union and African Union, also referred to as; European Union-African Union Partnership in Higher Education (EDULINK), and the Scandinavian partnerships with African universities (Teferra, 2013/14). The EDULINK Program was initiated to foster capacity building and regional integration in University education through institutional networking. EDULINK represents a harmonised approach for the implementation of European Commission (EC) funded programs in the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (OACP), with a view to improving the effectiveness, management and impact of ACP-EU co-operation higher education. The introduction of EC initiatives like the 'ACP Science and Technology Programme', 'Erasmus Mundus' and the launching of the 'Intra-ACP Mobility Scheme, also known as the Nyerere Consolidated Scholarship has transformed the support base of University education in Africa (Teferra, 2013/14; Johnston, 2014).

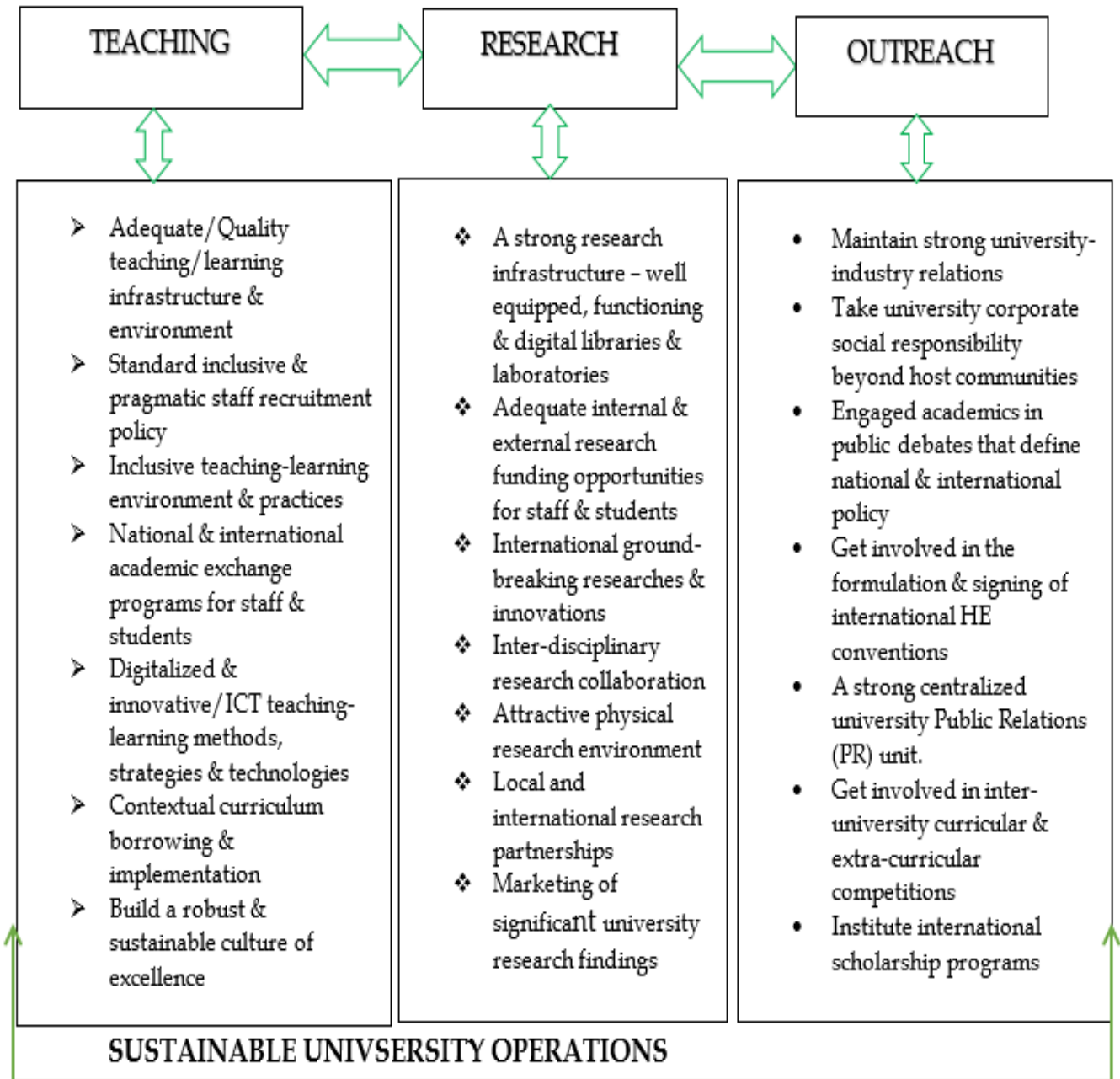
The University of Pretoria, South Africa, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ghana, Makerere University, Uganda, University of Nairobi Kenya, Universities of Ibadan, Nigeria, Addis Ababa University are few amongst the beneficiary institutions of this partnership - as they are the host institutions for the Intra-ACP mobility program and all the accompanying benefits. During the 2013/2014 academic year, the program committed worth 35 million Euros in scholarships for university students in beneficiary countries and universities (Terefa, 2014). It is through such internationalisation avenues that the above universities and many others have been able to project and market themselves to the larger world. It is therefore not surprising that these universities were recently ranked amongst the first 30 African Universities (UniRank, 2020). Through the academic programs harmonisation scheme under the Bologna process, many African Universities have been able to harmonise their degree structures in line with the Bachelor Master Ph.D (BMP) system as recommended by the Bologna process and partnerships (Ngwa and Lawyer, 2020). With these, graduates from these African Universities are able to be assessed and have access to the job market the same as their counterparts in Western or European Universities with similar degree structures.

The international partnership between Scandinavian and African universities has been described as probably one of the most sustained and impressive forms of cooperation. Scandinavian countries especially Norway and Sweden have committed a large amount of funds for several decades, even when support for HE and universities in Africa was low. In November 2010, at a 'National Seminar on Norwegian Support to Higher Education in Tanzania' organised in Dares Salaam, it was disclosed that the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) had committed NOK750 million to the sector for over four decades which has significantly impacted sustainable capacity building both institutionally and nationally. Another similar impressive success story of university internationalisation in Africa is SIDA's (Swedish International Development Cooperation) support to higher education research and development in Ethiopia for more than three decades (Teferra, 2013/14; Johnston, 2014).

Thanks to internationalisation and marketisation, OECD (2009) notes that student mobility has continued to grow at a pace with a 56% increase in the number of foreign students in the OECD area since 2000. This increase has been accompanied by other newer forms of mobility, prominent among which is the international training mobility and the mobility of higher education institutions, whether on a commercial or partnership basis (Marginson; Wende, 2006, OECD, 2009). Internationalisation as a product of globalisation has therefore not only helped in the growth of collaboration amongst universities in the world and sustainable multicultural universities especially in OECD countries but has also increased access of global citizens into HE.

### **A Framework for IM strategies within the Tri-function of Universities**

Below is a proposed framework of enhancement strategies for IM within the tri-function of universities. The framework is a conception of the authors with adapted knowledge from reviewed literature on global best practices in university internationalisation, marketisation and sustainability. The framework is anchored on the tri-function of universities – teaching, research and outreach or community services.



Source: Ngwa and Yuni (2023)

Figure 2: Proposed framework of enhancement strategies for IM of universities

Conventionally, universities are known to have a tri-function. Nasution (2006) and Togo (2009) confirm that major functions of any university are teaching, research and outreach or social service activities within and outside universities. Based on this definition and looking at figure 2, it is evident that enhanced internationalisation and marketisation strategies for university sustainability can only be adopted within the tri-function of universities – teaching, research and outreach.

### *Teaching*

Ensuring adequate teaching-learning infrastructure and environment is critical, as staff, students and other support staff depend on the available infrastructure and an enabling study environment to effectively teach, learn or offer services to the public. Classrooms, laboratories, offices, libraries, ICT infrastructure, hostels amongst others have a role to play in an effective teaching-learning process and selling the image of the university to the outside world. A standard inclusive and pragmatic recruitment policy that reflects international best practices is needed to ensure that qualified, quality and inclusive staffing is achieved for students and the entire university to get the best in terms of teaching, research and outreach. Inclusive teaching practices and environment must be adopted to accommodate the needs of learners with special needs and disabilities, this is very important in an era of sustainability where the sustainable development goal for education is on ensuring inclusive quality education and lifelong learning at all levels of education. Universities must promote international exchanges amongst staff and students in terms of teaching and learning to help them share and gain new experiences with colleagues from other institutions nationally and internationally. All necessary innovations and technologies for teaching and learning must be exploited by the university to meet up with the contemporary realities of university education. The curriculum must be relevant to the national and international job market. Such relevance could be gotten through contextual borrowing and implementation of relevant curricula. Above all, it is very necessary to build a robust culture of excellence and sustainability.

### *Research*

Research is key to knowledge discovery and problem solving not only within universities but for the society as a whole. In fact, the ability of teachers and students to acquire the knowledge to teach and release for societal use is dependent on the research capacity of the university. Consequently, building institutional research capacity for sustainable internationalisation and marketisation will entail: putting in place a strong research infrastructure, adequate internal and external research funding, promoting interdisciplinary research collaboration, marketing groundbreaking research findings, and creating a conducive research environment for local, visiting and foreign scholars in the university.

### *Outreach/ Social services*

Outreach is the real function of the university that directly connects the university community and the external stakeholders. This means that there has to be a strong and effective university public relations unit, manned probably by a Chief Information Officer under the supervision of the Vice Chancellor or Rector. In some institutions, the public relations unit is a sub-office under the Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Research and External Cooperation or the Directorate of Internationalisation and Relations with the business world. These offices, under the supervision of the university management, play a key role in ensuring that the university fulfils its

outreach function, whose effectiveness could be a direct source of national and international exposure for the university. Consequently, some of the outreach internationalisation and marketisation strategies could include amongst others: maintaining a strong university-industry relations through the signing of win-win memoranda with necessary industries, take university corporate social responsibility beyond the host communities in order to sell a positive image of the university, encourage academics to engage in public debates that inform policy, get the university involved in international conventions on the promotion of higher education when and where necessary, instituting a scholarship program that attracts both students from every part of the world, and also engaging the university in national and international academic and co-curricular competitions that offer students and staff the opportunities to travel, showcase their talents, share knowledge with others and exchange experiences.

## **Conclusion**

The Education 2030 Framework for Action which provides guidance towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all), recognizes the position of higher education in this agenda. The significant contribution of higher education to sustainable development is a clear indication that universities have a critical role to play in the attainment of this global goal. A sustainable university system should therefore be seen to contribute to: social cohesion, intercultural understanding, peace and security as well as the search for more sustainable production methods and consumption practices around the world. For the International Association of Universities (IAU), there can be no sustainable quality higher education without the consideration of global societal responsibility. This social responsibility is what brings higher education institutions to contribute not only in the global education agenda but in all sustainable development endeavours.

Based on the above, it is crystal clear that we live in a dispensation where no university system can work in isolation, and that is where the internationalisation and marketisation of universities come in. Stakeholders of Sub-Saharan African, and especially Nigerian Universities therefore have the responsibility to adopt critical and enhanced internationalisation and marketisation strategies as proposed in the framework that could expose the continent's universities to the global stage for academic, socio-economic and cultural competition in this era of globalisation and sustainability.

## **Policy Recommendations**

Students and the academic staff constitute the key stakeholders of any university system. Thus, promoting ICTs, encouraging innovative approaches to teaching and learning, strengthening research capacities and building a strong relationship with all stakeholders are essential components of universities' strategic responses to internationalisation and sustainability. The following recommendations could go a long

way in positively redefining policy direction in the internationalisation and marketization of Nigerian Universities for sustainability.

### *Need for an innovative/ICT system for teaching-learning*

Advances in Information Communication Technology (ICTs) have led to fundamental changes in teaching-learning practices. Staff and students previously taught or acquired knowledge from printed books and journals in libraries and in lectures delivered in university lecture halls. However, in this era of ICT, they can log into virtual libraries, surf the internet, use virtual spaces for collaboration and group work, enroll in e-learning courses, and participate in online networks that can span the globe. The implication is that learning has become an interactive and collective exercise in cyberspace, and in this process, the relationship between students and teachers have drastically changed, as the image of lecturers has been eroded by ICTs. Consequently, preparing students for the global knowledge economy is now much more than a technical issue.

There is a need for a paradigm shift towards timely innovative teaching-learning within the Nigerian university system. In this era where teaching is more about facilitating a learning process than knowledge transfer, it will require a new breed of academic staff who are able to make use of different instructional methods and strategies. Measures that will encourage digital and innovative teaching and learning must be part of any Nigerian university system that thinks beyond its geographical location. This is to prepare staff and students to effectively fit into any internationalisation and marketisation agenda of the university.

Looking at ICT infrastructure, it is seen that with the spread of ICTs, space and distance have become relative concepts. Learning processes have become increasingly dependent on ICTs because they connect students and lecturers/researchers to the international knowledge community. Consequently, it is unthinkable that any Nigeria university could become a center of excellence without a reliable and up-to-date ICT infrastructure. Any university's strategy for internationalisation and marketisation must develop ways of acquiring not only physical infrastructure but most importantly ICT infrastructure and ensure that it is used in the most efficient and effective ways to link the university to the outside world. Implementing this amongst other strategies proposed in the teaching-learning domain could be a recipe for sustainability.

### *Ensure adequate research capacity*

It is unfortunate that research, which is a key source of knowledge and solutions to societal problems, is often the weakest and most neglected component of higher education in Africa (Teferra and Greijn, 2010), not leaving out Nigeria. Yet, networks of researchers have emerged as crucial vehicles for acquiring knowledge from global sources, enhancing understanding of global phenomena and developing solutions to national and international problems. If the Nigerian and Nigerian Universities must make significant and recognized contributions to regional and global knowledge, thereby attracting students, researchers and resources, then research capacity within the



country's universities must be adequately boosted. Developing a meaningful and comprehensive research capacity through institutional research training, adequate funding, research infrastructure and promoting collaborative interdisciplinary research must therefore be the core of any university's internationalisation and marketization agenda.

### ***Transformational Leadership, management and quality assurance practices***

Sustainable internationalisation and marketisation of Nigerian Universities will require prudent and effective leadership, management and the commitment of such a management body to establish and maintain quality standards across board. Nigerian universities need highly trained staff who are not only able to recognize opportunities offered by technological innovations, but are also able to transform them into improved solutions for teaching and learning. Oftentimes, such technological innovations are expected to come from the technicians working at the bottom of the hierarchy. The idea that universities might need a strong centralised PR unit headed by a chief information officer who is in a position to influence policy making at the highest level is not yet popular amongst Nigerian universities.

The introduction of innovative systems for teaching and learning will require academic curricula and methods of assessment involving a more integrated approach to the various disciplines. It is necessary that management coordinates the process of interdepartmental collaboration if this must take place. This is to demonstrate the leadership needed to overcome the resistance to change that can invariably become a major obstacle to the attainment of the necessary objectives. Ensuring adequate research capacities within Nigerian universities may require more than just additional funds. University leaders and management must be determined to ensure the scarce resources. It is common to find that research funding provided by foreign agencies to African universities, which is often scarce, is diverted to other uses thereby fragmenting research efforts. It therefore becomes necessary for university managements to develop coherent research agendas, if possible, in partnership with other regional or international institutions. This will not only ensure prudent management of such funds but will also expose the local research team to external experts where experiences could be shared and the university image promoted.

Considering that reforms are meant to be for the better, quality assurance mechanisms need to be put in place at all levels and in all Nigerian Universities to monitor and evaluate the extent to which the university is meeting up with its objectives in terms of teaching, research and outreach. Enhance internationalisation and marketisation of the universities can only happen when they are up to standards in their tri-functions.

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