

Chapter 2

The Role of Internationalisation in Improving Intra-African Research Collaboration

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Abstract

Strengthening research capacity on the African continent is key for progress and development of solutions that are relevant for continental challenges, needs and interests. Research collaboration in higher education enables knowledge exchange and plays a major role in innovation, creation of new knowledge, and increasing the visibility of research. International research collaboration, as one of the key aspects of internationalisation of higher education, contributes to the exchange of ideas across borders and can positively impact the quality of research and education. At the same time, internationalisation can contribute to the reinforcement of global power dynamics and inequalities in knowledge production and dissemination. Due to global inequalities and the Eurocentric hegemony in higher education and knowledge production, African institutions tend to engage and collaborate primarily with their counterparts in the global North while side-lining collaboration with institutions and researchers on

the African continent. This chapter explores the reasons for the lack of intra-African research collaboration. We focus on the impact of colonialism and post-colonial neglect on Africa's higher education, and internationalisation practices which have largely followed conceptions and definitions developed in the global North. We also discuss funding challenges and dependence on external donors, and the geopolitics and power dynamics in knowledge production. The chapter ends with a discussion about structural and systemic changes that are needed on the continent, and the role of internationalisation of higher education in addressing the challenges and contributing to a meaningful expansion of intra-African research collaboration.

1. Introduction

The African Union's Agenda 2063, the African continent's long-term vision, calls for "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena" (African Union, 2015, p. 1). The aspiration of the Agenda 2063 is for the African continent to become a "strong, united and influential partner on the global stage making its contribution to peace, human progress, peaceful co-existence and welfare" (African Union, 2015, p. 1). An important part of Agenda 2063 is the development of capacity and human capital through "sustained investments in higher education, science, technology, research and innovation" (African Union, 2015, p. 2). Agenda 2063 also calls for African universities to broaden and harness their collaborations, partnerships and networks "to enable high quality university education" (African Union, 2015, p. 15).

One of the main roles of higher education is the production of knowledge for socio-economic and sustainable development, eradication of poverty, livelihood improvements and good governance (Aina, 2010; African Union, 2014; UNESCO, 2017). Strengthening research capacity on the African continent is key for progress and development of solutions

that are relevant for the local and regional challenges, needs and interests. Research collaboration enables knowledge exchange and plays a major role in innovation, creation of new knowledge (Mouton, Prozesky & Lutomiah, 2018; Onyancha, 2021; Vieira & Cerdeira, 2022; Heleta & Jithoo, 2023) and increasing the visibility of research (Asubiaro, 2019). International research collaboration, as one of the key aspects of internationalisation, contributes to the exchange of ideas across borders and can positively impact the quality of research and education.

However, as Zeleza (2012) points out, while internationalisation provides numerous opportunities for African universities to engage, network and collaborate with institutions across the globe, it also contributes to the reinforcement of global power dynamics and inequalities in knowledge production and dissemination. The higher education and research landscape around the globe continues to be “characterised by a highly uneven distribution of resources, unequal and extractive relationships between institutions and academics in wealthier and poorer nations, and an over-representation of Western knowledge systems in both teaching and research” (Stein & Silva, 2020, p. 552). Long after the end of colonialism, and despite the declarations and rhetoric about Africanisation and epistemic decolonisation, African higher education systems and institutions remain trapped in the colonial legacy and Eurocentric epistemologies, curricula, pedagogies and research methodologies and approaches (Zeleza, 2012; Nyamnjoh, 2019). International collaboration, research and knowledge production globally, and particularly on the African continent, continue to be framed and conceptualised by the institutions and academia in the global North and characterised by inequities, inequalities, hegemonic structures and power dynamics (Nyamnjoh, 2019).

Due to global inequalities and the Eurocentric hegemony in higher education and knowledge production, African institutions tend to engage and collaborate primarily with their counterparts in the global North while side-lining collaboration with institutions and researchers on the African

continent. Reasons for this can be found in the colonial roots of higher education in Africa, coloniality, postcolonial neglect of higher education systems and institutions by African governments, disinvestment in research and higher education in Africa over the past few decades, and the international funding structures that favour the institutions from the global North. This way, African academia and scholarship continue to be shaped by the Eurocentric perspectives and paradigms, deriving their “impetus not from deep engagement with the real of the local, but from ritual obeisance to the theoretical and methodological fads” from the global North (Zezeza, 2012, p. 16). Asubiaro and Shaik (2021) suggest that the continent urgently needs to find solutions for the lack of intra-African research collaboration as one way of strengthening Africa’s knowledge base and creating solutions for the continent and the world.

This chapter will explore the reasons for the lack of intra-African research collaboration. We will discuss the impact of colonialism and post-colonial neglect on Africa’s higher education. Our focus will also be on internationalisation practices in Africa which have largely followed conceptions and definitions developed in the global North. We will discuss funding challenges and dependence on external donors, and the geopolitics and power dynamics in knowledge production. We will unpack bibliometric data which shows that international collaboration with institutions and academics outside the African continent dominates collaborative research and knowledge production in Africa, while collaboration with African counterparts remains miniscule. The chapter will also focus on the structural and systemic changes that are needed and the role of internationalisation of higher education in addressing this challenge and contributing to a meaningful expansion of intra-African research collaboration.

2. The Impact of Colonialism on African Higher Education and Post-Colonial Neglect

Educational systems, institutions, practices and curricula around the world continue to be based on, or heavily influenced by, colonial and neo-colonial models, ideas, worldviews and ideologies (Rizvi, Lingard & Lavia, 2006). Several African universities were established as part of the colonial project, modelled on the European institutions from the colonial centres (Zezeza, 2012; Mamdani, 2018). The purpose of colonial education in Africa was to develop local but ‘Westernised’ elites that would contribute to the maintenance of colonial rule (Ngũgĩ, 1986; Nyamnjoh, 2012; Basaran & Olsson, 2019). Colonial universities taught a Eurocentric curriculum that was designed for the European context, without any attempt to incorporate indigenous and other knowledges, worldviews and perspectives (Mkandawire, 1997; Maringe & Ojo, 2017). Similarly, research focus areas, interests and disciplines were imported from the colonial centres and imposed onto the colonised societies for the purpose of sustaining and maintaining colonial projects. The colonies were also used as laboratories where colonial scientists could test their often harmful hypotheses and theories (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

The post-independence period saw the expansion of higher education on the continent. However, the much-needed epistemic decolonisation did not take place in most African countries and institutions during this period, and African academia largely continued to model itself on the Eurocentric models and worldviews (Nyamnjoh, 2012; Mamdani, 2018; Nyamnjoh, 2019). As Mama (2007, p. 9) points out, after independence, African universities continued to institutionalise Eurocentric disciplines and curricula, with little attention given to the “epistemological implications of importing paradigms and methodologies generated in very different historical and cultural contexts”. Even the institutions that emerged after political decolonisation and independence in Africa, have been shaped by the Eurocentric models, canon and curricula. Nyamnjoh (2019, p. 3) posits that African higher education institutions ‘have not been

domesticated' since independence "through epistemological renegotiation informed by local languages, cosmologies and worldviews". Instead, they remain "trapped in the institutional and epistemic economies of Euro-American models and Eurocentricism" (Zezeza, 2012, p. 10). The African Union (2016) believes that the continent and its higher education systems and institutions are yet to fully confront the colonial and neocolonial legacies and influences and transform; these are what a number of scholars call the Westernised and Eurocentric universities in Africa (Mamdani, 2018; Mpofu & Steyn, 2021).

Apart from the challenges related to the colonial roots of many African universities and the lack of epistemic decolonisation after independence, the neglect, mismanagement and lack of investment in the higher education sector in the post-colonial period have resulted in substantial weakening of the universities and research institutions on the continent (Aina, 2010; African Union, 2014; Heleta & Bagus, 2021). In addition, violent conflicts and political instability in many African countries have led to the destruction of universities, exodus of academics and censorship of academic freedom (Aina, 2010). Moreover, structural adjustments and neoliberal impositions, promoted and imposed by international financial institutions, have since the 1980s contributed to the further marginalisation and impoverishment of African universities (Habib et al., 2008). Over a few decades, institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund pressured African governments to prioritise primary and secondary education at the expense of higher education and research (Aina, 2010; Mouton, 2018; Heleta & Bagus, 2021). These policy prescriptions and impositions have led to the neglect of higher education across the African continent and the brain drain in academia, directly undermining the ability of universities and research institutions to conduct research and develop new knowledge (Mama, 2007; Habib et al., 2008; Zezeza, 2012; Chelwa, 2021). Mouton (2018) points out that the brain drain in the 1980s and 1990s, caused by the above-mentioned

challenges and impositions on the continent, was the main reason for the decline of African research output.

Despite the recent change in policy prescriptions by international financial institutions, many African higher education systems and universities have not been able to recover and rebuild their capacity for research, innovation and knowledge production. They continue to be under resourced and underfunded. The neglect of higher education on the continent was reinforced during the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals between 2000 and 2015, when the focus of development initiatives was on expanding and improving primary education around the world (United Nations, 2015). Furthermore, the much-needed changes are not expected to take place during the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, which do not focus on rebuilding and strengthening higher education systems and institutions in low-income countries (Heleta & Bagus, 2021). After the finalisation of the SDGs, the African Union (2016) released its own strategy for revitalisation of education, stressing the need to strengthen higher education, research and innovation in Africa after decades of neglect and marginalisation.

3. Internationalisation in African Higher Education

In this chapter, we frame internationalisation in African higher education through a decolonial lens. This framing “challenges the colonial vertical conceptions of internationalisation of higher education where ‘the international’ is Europe and North America” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021, p. 78) and where internationalisation is conceptualised based on the thinking, ideas, worldviews and practices developed in and for the global North (de Wit, 2012; Heleta & Chasi, 2022). This framing of internationalisation further aims to transform it – from a largely administrative task focused on operational and quantifiable activities such as international mobility of students and staff and signing of memorandums of

understanding for international collaboration – into a critical knowledge project underpinned by decolonial thinking and epistemic plurality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).

Due to the colonial impositions and coloniality, African higher education institutions can be said to be highly internationalised. They in most cases have one of the European languages as a mode of instruction; the scholarship they consume is largely from Europe and North America; and the theories, methodologies, paradigms, discourses and epistemologies they engage with and which shape the thinking and worldviews of African scholars, are based on Eurocentric models and approaches (Teferra, 2020). This, however, is not something that should be celebrated, as it is the result of the historical colonial conquest and neocolonial domination in knowledge production and dissemination. Similarly, African universities have over the past few decades tended to replicate internationalisation concepts and practices from the global North instead of developing concepts and approaches relevant for their own contexts and realities (de Wit, 2012; Zeleza, 2012; Heleta & Chasi, 2022). The dominant approaches, frameworks and definitions of internationalisation of higher education from the global North are “devoid of epistemic and ideological thought” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021, p. 79) and contextual, historical and contemporary relevance in Africa. The replication of Eurocentric internationalisation approaches, practices and strategies at African institutions continues to facilitate and maintain the domination of the Euro-American epistemic canon and promotion of colonial impositions and Eurocentric knowledge as universal, neutral and objective knowledge that must be adapted and accepted by all. At the same time, through this process, indigenous knowledges and worldviews continue to be devalued, delegitimised and erased (Akena, 2012).

Stein (2017, p. 1) argues that the mainstream approaches to higher education internationalisation continue to be framed in ways that “further entrench colonialist, capitalist global relations, and reproduce the Euro-supremacist foundations of modern Western higher education.” This way, the Eurocentric

knowledge is continuously reaffirmed as being the “centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of ‘civilised’ knowledge” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 63). Coloniality and Eurocentric hegemony still shape geopolitics, power relations, institutional structures and cultures, worldviews, representations, epistemic and curriculum choices in higher education and internationalisation around the world (Beck, 2021). The dominant geopolitics of knowledge bestows privileges on Eurocentric knowledge systems, which are seen as the only ones with the “social privilege to shape global thinking” (Shahjahan & Morgan, 2016, p. 95), while universities in Africa and elsewhere in the global South are expected to conform to and replicate this “global thinking”.

Internationalisation of higher education in Africa continues to be heavily influenced by unequal power relations, Eurocentric notions, principles and knowledge, and internationalisation concepts and frameworks from the global North. Due to these many factors, the curricula at most African universities continue to be dominated by Euro-American scholarship (Nyamnjoh, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021), while research methods and practices remain based on Eurocentric principles and norms (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). African universities tend to partner and actively collaborate primarily with institutions from the global North (Jowi, 2009; Maringe & Ojo, 2017). This is despite the fact that the research partnerships between African institutions and their counterparts in the global North often resemble junior/senior relations and are contributing to the entrenchment of Eurocentric domination in academia (Maringe, Foskett & Woodfield, 2013). Research collaborations between institutions, academics and researchers on the African continent remain negligible when compared to collaborations with the institutions and scholars outside the continent (Mouton & Blanckenberg, 2018). According to Jowi (2012), lack of funding is one of the main reasons for the lack of meaningful and sustainable intra-African partnerships and engagements.

4. Funding Challenges and Dependence on External Donors in Africa

Lack of funding for higher education, research and innovation is one of the most pressing contemporary challenges facing African higher education and research sectors. In 2017, the average regional investment in research and development in North America and Western Europe was 2.5% of GDP; 2.1% of GDP in East Asia and the Pacific; 0.7% of GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean; and 0.4% of GDP in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2020). No country in Africa spends 1% of its GDP on research and development, even though African countries committed in 2006 to increase their spending to this level (African Union, 2016). For example, South Africa and Kenya spend 0.8% of their GDP on research and development; Tunisia spends 0.7%; Egypt, Ethiopia and Mali spend 0.6%; Botswana and Tanzania 0.5%; Ghana, Senegal and Namibia 0.4%; and Uganda and Nigeria 0.1%. In comparison, countries that spend more on research and development globally include South Korea (4.1%); Japan (3.4%); Germany (2.9%); United States (2.7%); Australia (2.2%); China (2%); Brazil and Malaysia (1.3%); and Russia (1.1%) (UNESCO, 2021).

South Africa is the only African country that provides considerable funding for research and development, particularly through the National Research Foundation (NRF). An analysis of research output by African researchers between 2009-2014 which indicated sources of funding shows that the NRF was the main funder. Apart from the NRF and the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, all other funders were from outside the continent (Kozma, Calero Medina & Costas, 2018). According to UNESCO (2020), the major proportion of funding for research and development in South Africa comes from the government, followed by business and foreign funding. In Uganda and Mali, most of the funding comes from abroad, followed by government funding. In Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda and Mozambique, the majority of funding comes from the government, followed by foreign funding.

Due to the low investment in higher education and research on the African continent, higher education institutions often depend on external funding for their research activities. This is creating dependencies on foreign donors and often forces African institutions and academics to align their research priorities to those of the donors (Beaudry, Mouton & Prozesky, 2018a). According to Alphonsus Neba from the African Academy of Sciences, the role of external funders in funding research in Africa “is so pervasive that if they were to pull out, research on the continent would be seriously disrupted and, in most countries, it would literally grind to a halt” (in Omungo, 2018). An example of this is Makerere University in Uganda. Between 2000–2012, Makerere University was able to maintain its research capacity and engage in research projects only because it received funding primarily from Europe and the United States. During this time, the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology provided US \$1.2 million of its own funds to the university. In comparison, over the same period, Makerere University received US \$10 million from the European Union, US \$16.5 million from the Carnegie Corporation, US \$40 million from the government of Norway and US \$62 million from the government of Sweden, to name a few external donors (Mouton, 2018). Arguably, without the external funding the university would not have been able to conduct most of its research activities.

5. Geopolitics and Power Dynamics in Knowledge Production

Nyamnjoh (2019) points out that global knowledge production is characterised by geopolitics and power dynamics that tend to be unfair, unequal, hegemonic, prescriptive and hierarchical. Briggs and Weathers (2016, p. 466) add that knowledge production and academic publishing are “rife with structural inequalities.” Global knowledge-related power imbalances continue to be maintained through knowledge generation systems, with the structures and processes controlled by the institutions and academics from the global

North (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 56) writes about the research “through imperial eyes” to describe research structures, systems, approaches and practices which assume that Eurocentric ideas and worldviews are the “only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings.” As articulated by Ba (2022, p. 557), globally, academia continues to be a “site of epistemic violence with distribution of power historically sedimented through colonialism and racism.” Research and development of new knowledge, particularly in Africa, continue to be embedded in colonial practices (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Ba (2022, p. 557) asserts that this is evident in the contemporary research practices by many scholars from the global North who, while collaborating with African institutions and scholars, “still echo the colonial dynamics that underlined the first research projects conducted by Europeans during the colonial period.”

In the research in and on Africa by scholars from the global North, “dynamics of domination, exploitation, and extraction” continue to be seen in research practices (Ba, 2022, p.558). Kessi, Marks and Ramugondo (2020, p. 273) write about the political economy of knowledge and research that are dominated by the global North and which focus on the extraction of data. The research that takes place between scholars from African institutions and their counterparts in the global North in most cases benefits the latter, “who, armed with assumed theoretical sophistication and economic resources” frequently reduce African scholars to collectors of data and research assistants (Nyamnjoh, 2012, p. 145). To be able to work on research projects and publish with scholars from the global North in academic journals that are in most cases based in the global North, or controlled by editorial boards dominated by European and North American scholars, African scholars often have to “mimic how Northern researchers would study their own continent if they are to have any success” (Chelwa, 2021, p. 95). De Waal (2015) argues that the research and scholarship about Africa by

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African scholars “is operating at only a fraction of its true potential, and that it is hampered by the preferences, policies and politics of the Western academy.” Due to all this, African research and scholarship continue to be shaped by Eurocentric ideas, worldviews, paradigms and methodologies instead of being grounded in the African historical and contemporary realities and drawing from the plurality of global knowledge (Zezeza, 2012).

Global academic knowledge production and dissemination systems continue to marginalise African scholars and scholarship (Kamola, 2012). The scholarship by academics and researchers based on the African continent – across fields and disciplines – tends to be ignored (Mama, 2007) and is cited less than the scholarship by academics based elsewhere in the world (Briggs & Weathers, 2016). Even the scholarship about Africa is dominated by the scholars from the global North (Mkandawire, 1997; Mama, 2007; Briggs & Weathers, 2016; Chelwa, 2021); what Hedt-Gauthier et al. (2019, p. 8) call the knowledge ‘about Africa without Africa.’ This continues unabated despite the fact that much of the scholarship about Africa from the global North is failing ‘to give a credible account of what is happening in Africa’ (Mkandawire, 1997, p. 26) due to the hegemonic Eurocentric worldviews, ideological blind spots and in some cases the lack of basic knowledge about the continent. Yet, the curriculum at most African universities continues to be dominated by this kind of Euro-American scholarship. In this way, the Westernised universities in Africa are failing to engage their students critically on African perspectives and realities (Nyamnjoh, 2012).

Global power imbalances in knowledge production and the continued Eurocentric epistemic hegemony are closely linked to the availability of funding for research and the practices of research funders. For example, a study of two decades of funding for global health research by the Gates Foundation shows that 88.4% or US \$63 billion went to the institutions in the global North to primarily study health and other challenges in Africa and elsewhere in the global South

(Schwab, 2021). This way, the global South continues to be seen as a problem that global North's charity and 'know-how' can fix. All the while, the structural inequalities between the global North and South, based on colonial and neocolonial domination and exploitation, persist. The example about the Gates Foundation is not an isolated practice. Chibanda et al. (2021, p. 553) posit that 'institutional racism is built into academic policies, processes, and hierarchies.' This is often maintained by the international research funding structures and mechanisms, which continue to award the majority of funding to the institutions and scholars in the global North, while the institutions and scholars in the global South continue to be added to the funded projects as sub-awardees and research assistants.

6. The Lack of Intra-African Research Collaboration: What the Data Tells Us

Due to the neoliberal impositions in the 1980s and 1990s, which resulted in neglect of higher education in Africa and brain drain in academia, Sub-Saharan Africa's share of global scientific publications declined from 1% in 1987 to 0.7% in 1996 (Tijssen, 2007). In 2005, the percentage of Africa's share of global scientific publications increased to 1.5%, and further grew to 3.2% in 2016 (Mouton & Blanckenberg, 2018). However, the steady increase of Africa's scientific output cannot be attributed to the increase in intra-African research collaboration over the same time period. African researchers and scientists collaborate primarily with their counterparts from outside the African continent (about 50% of co-authored papers), and with colleagues within their countries (about 40% of co-authorships). The intra-African research collaboration that results in research output and production of new knowledge has been negligible in the 2005-2016 period. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

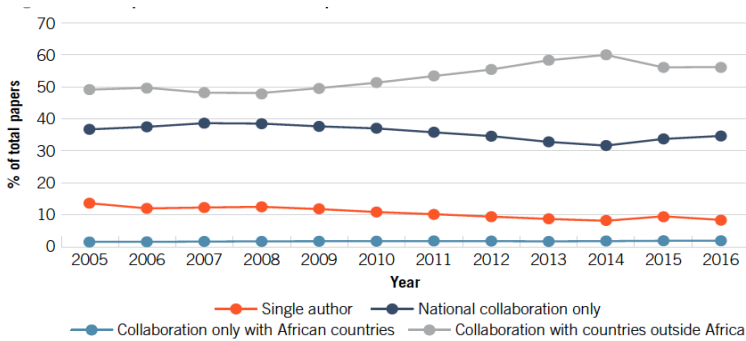


Figure 1: African international research collaboration (2005–2016). Source: Mouton and Blanckenberg (2018)

A similar conclusion was made by Vieira and Cerdeira (2022) in their study which looked at the research collaborations within Africa. They found that over the past few decades, African institutions and scientists have been participating in international research networks and this led to an increase in publications with scientists and researchers from outside the continent. Their data, which encompasses the 1990–2018 period, shows that in most African countries, the number of co-authored publications with collaborators from outside the continent far outstrips the number of publications from intra-African collaborations. In their study, Vieira and Cerdeira (2022, p. 2015) also focused on intra-African academic and scientific networks. While they found some evidence of continental networks and collaborations, they emphasise that there is still a ‘long way to go to create more solid collaboration networks for the exchange and creation of knowledge’ on the African continent. Similar collaboration trends to those shown by Mouton and Blanckenberg (2018) and Vieira and Cerdeira (2022) have been found in other studies focusing on collaborative research by African researchers and scientists (Asubiario, 2019; Hedt-Gauthier et al., 2019; Asubiario & Shaik, 2021; Onyancha, 2021; Heleta & Jithoo, 2023).

While the publications data in Mouton and Blanckenberg (2018) focuses on the 2005–2016 period and Vieira and Cerdeira (2022) focus on the 1990–2018 period, we do not

expect that there have been any significant improvements since 2018 as there have not been any groundbreaking changes in African higher education, whether we talk about funding or prioritisation of intra-African research collaboration. At the same time, while the data in figure 1 shows a negative picture when it comes to intra-African research collaboration, it also shows that African academics, researchers and scientists are involved in research collaborations and the majority of Africa's research output in the 2005-2016 period resulted in collaborative research output (around 90%). This means that the dynamics, skills and willingness to engage in collaborative international research exist on the continent. The data further indicates that there is a lot of work that must be done to increase and improve intra-African partnerships and collaborations in higher education and ensure that researchers across the continent are enabled and supported—by their governments, institutions and internationalisation practitioners—to participate in intra-African research projects which aim to develop new knowledge and solutions to the myriad of challenges facing Africa and the world.

One of the major limitations of bibliographic analysis of research collaboration involving African researchers is the fact that the majority of African journals are not indexed in the Web of Science and other global scientific bibliographic databases. This makes the research published in many African journals invisible in bibliographic studies (Asubiaro, 2019; Hedt-Gauthier et al., 2019). However, while bibliometric analyses of research collaborations have their limitations, they remain an important methodology for assessing collaborations in higher education (Onyancha, 2021) and offer an important insight into research collaborations that include African academics. Furthermore, while authorship is not the only way to measure research collaborations, it remains one of the main indicators for assessment of the extent of research engagements and collaborations involving academics and researchers (Hedt-Gauthier et al., 2019).

In addition to the above data about research output, the results of a survey of 7,513 African academics, researchers and

scientists by Mouton, Prozesky and Lutomiah (2018) show the types of academic collaboration they engage in. The majority of surveyed African researchers engage in collaboration with colleagues at their institutions. This is followed by international collaboration, collaboration with counterparts within the country, and lastly with scholars in other African countries. This is illustrated in figure 2 below:

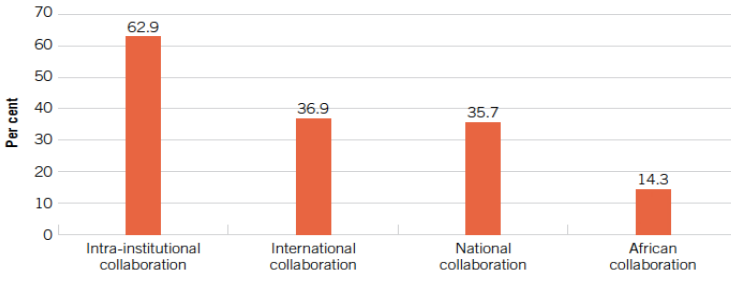


Figure 2: Types of collaboration in Africa. Source: Mouton, Prozesky and Lutomiah (2018)

This figure gives another important indication of the research collaboration trends in African higher education. It shows that intra-African collaboration lags behind other forms of collaboration and that much remains to be done to change this. This is despite the fact that a 2005 survey by the International Association of Universities (2005) found that the majority of surveyed African universities indicated that intra-African partnerships and collaborations were their main priorities. We can see from the two figures above that this has not translated into the growth of intra-African research collaborations and much work remains to be done to make this a reality. However, as in the case of the first figure which showed collaborative research output, the second figure also shows the eagerness to collaborate among African researchers and scientists, and the need to focus on expanding intra-African collaborative research opportunities while continuing to maintain and expand partnerships and collaborations within institutions and countries and with other parts of the world.

7. How to Expand Intra-African Research Collaboration?

Beaudry, Mouton and Prozesky (2018b) argue that the increase in Africa's research output since 2005, and the expansion of international research collaborations with countries, institutions and scholars from outside the African continent, have been primarily influenced by the strategies and interventions of foreign institutions and donors, and not the strategies, policies and initiatives of the African Union, African governments or African higher education institutions. This could possibly explain the expansion of research collaborations and research output with the institutions and scholars outside the African continent. We believe that comprehensive and strategic support and initiatives – on the continental, regional and national levels – are necessary if we are to see an increase in research partnerships and collaborations within the African continent. The goals, visions, priorities and strategies driving African research cannot be shaped or decided by foreign governments, donors and institutions. The African Union, governments, higher education ministries and systems, universities, researchers, scientists and academics must decide on African priorities and increase Africa's research output through intra-African collaboration, while also maintaining and expanding their other linkages, partnerships and collaborations. Stronger links between African researchers and institutions would contribute to the promotion of research priorities that are relevant for the continent and its people (Onyancha, 2021). Asubiaro and Shaik (2021) stress that the expansion of intra-African research collaborations will be key for the continent's future, as externally developed solutions have not led to higher living standards and desired development in Africa.

African governments and other continental stakeholders must begin to mobilise resources needed for improvements in higher education and research sectors (Aina, 2010; Asubiaro & Shaik, 2021). One of the strategic objectives of the *Continental Education Strategy for Africa: 2016-2025* is the expansion and revitalisation of higher education, research and innovation

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in order to be able to meaningfully and comprehensively address the challenges facing Africa and the world. The strategy highlights that, to improve research capacity and research output in African higher education, mobilisation of domestic funding, strengthening of higher education and research institutions, and the provision of adequate research infrastructure will be key. To achieve this, the African Union is calling on the African governments to honour their commitment to allocate 1% of their national GDP to research and innovation (African Union, 2016). This would go a long way to address capacity and infrastructure shortages in African higher education and would enable African institutions and researchers to develop their own research priorities instead of having to respond to external donor priorities and focus areas.

Due to the economic challenges on the African continent, African institutions will continue to depend on foreign funding for many of their research initiatives in the foreseeable future. Institutions and academics from the continent will also continue to collaborate with counterparts from outside Africa, and much of this research will be funded by foreign donors. There is therefore a need for African institutions, higher education leaders, researchers and academics to work together and put pressure on dominant institutions, organisations and funders of research – particularly those from the global North – and challenge structural inequalities, power dynamics, racism and unfair and unequal practices in higher education, research, academic collaboration and knowledge production. Chibanda et al. (2021, p. 554) note that “tackling systemic racism” and structural inequalities in international research collaboration will require the funders, institutions, researchers, academic book publishers and journals in the global North “to reckon with their own power and privilege and to push for a change in policies” that promote fair and equal research practices. Apart from this, there is an urgent need to take a stand against extractive research practices in Africa and the treatment of African researchers as field assistants by external researchers and institutions.

For Jowi (2012, p. 163), the most important work for strengthening intra-African research collaboration, which is key for Africa's higher education, research and innovation, will have to happen on the continent:

“Africa’s starting point would be to strengthen university collaborations within the continent to consolidate their areas of strength and develop a viable higher education and research area which they can then use to engage with the rest of the world. With this, Africa can change its position as a bystander and become a real player in the global knowledge society.”

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) argues that African universities must be the sites of relevant and critical research, teaching and learning which are rooted in African knowledges and ideas, while at the same time engaging extensively with scholars and knowledges from the rest of the world. Zeleza (2012, p. 3) adds that, to promote the knowledge project on the continent, African institutions must dismantle and decentre the Eurocentric hegemony and decolonise institutional cultures and knowledge in order to be able to develop ‘empowering knowledges for the South and symmetrical forms of internationalisation in higher education.’

For decades, internationalisation of higher education on the African continent has been based on the concepts and approaches replicated from the global North (de Wit, 2012; Zeleza, 2012). Ndlovu-Gatsheni writes that these dominant approaches are based on ‘colonial vertical conceptions of internationalisation’ and Eurocentric worldviews, ideas and practices. To counter this, he calls for the dismantling of the Eurocentric hegemony and a ‘horizontal non-colonial internationalisation of higher education’ which is underpinned by the plurality of knowledges and a ‘recognition of the diverse ways through which different people view and make sense of the world’ (2021, p. 78-79). In practice, this would lead to the development of internationalisation concepts and approaches relevant for complex and distinctive African contexts and realities, and incorporation of all global knowledges in the

curriculum, teaching and research endeavours in African higher education. Zeleza (2012) stresses that African higher education must be comprehensively internationalised but the conceptualisation of internationalisation must focus on the expansion and strengthening of the African knowledge project and intra-African engagements, while at the same time engaging and collaborating with other parts of the world and their knowledges.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) highlights that there cannot be truly international higher education unless knowledge is first decolonised. In Africa, decolonisation of knowledge is not about erasure of any knowledges. Rather, it is about dismantling Eurocentric hegemony and centring Africa in everything that African universities, scholars, researchers, intellectuals, practitioners and students do (Lebakeng, Phalane & Dalindjebo, 2006). For Ngũgĩ (1986, p. 88), decolonisation of knowledge is a ‘quest for relevance’ of African education and knowledge and requires ‘decolonisation of the mind’ of African scholars, researchers and university leaders, as most of them have been “schooled largely in the white [and Eurocentric] tradition. This imprinted the culture of whiteness” among them (Maserumule, 2015), shaping their knowledge-related interests, preferences and choices to this day.

Epistemic decolonisation also entails building ‘alternative spaces, networks and ways of knowing that transcend our epicolonial inheritance’ (Kessi, Marks & Ramugondo, 2020, p. 271). This includes strengthening and expansion of intra-African research collaboration in order to develop African solutions for African challenges. The key aspect of epistemic decolonisation is that “subjectivity, situatedness and positionality matter” (African Union, 2015, p. 274). Africa-centred research and knowledge, conceptualised and developed through intra-African collaborations and decolonised research methodologies and approaches, can become prime vehicles for this. Placing Africa at the centre of scholarship, research and teaching would ground indigenous African knowledge systems, perspectives and experiences and

empower African scholars to develop contextually relevant knowledge (Nyamnjoh, 2012; Fomunyam, 2017). Intra-African research networks, partnerships and collaborations could become key platforms where this much-needed contextually relevant knowledge could be developed and shared with the world.

Internationalisation scholars and practitioners on the African continent must work together to rethink and reconceptualise internationalisation of higher education in line with Africa's historical and contemporary challenges, needs, priorities and visions, and align academic research with their national and institutional challenges and priorities. This calls for more critical engagements among Africa's internationalisation experts, scholars and practitioners in order to find practical ways to expand intra-African partnerships and collaboration in higher education. They need to work to convince their university leaders that internationalisation – conceptually relevant to Africa – must become a priority that is comprehensively integrated in everything the universities do. Internationalisation practitioners also need to actively promote intra-African engagement and collaboration, including student and staff mobility, virtual engagement and joint postgraduate studies. The progress towards the implementation of the *African Continental Qualifications Framework* and the *Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States* (UNESCO, 2014) will be key in the process of strengthening intra-African collaboration in higher education.

University leaders, supported by internationalisation practitioners, have a responsibility to engage with national governments and ministries of higher education and source continental funding for intra-African research collaboration and academic and student mobility, and not leave their institutions, academics and students to depend on the funding from outside the continent which often comes with prescriptions and externally imposed conditions. In addition, African institutions, leaders and academics need to strengthen

and promote African academic publishing and journals in order to expand African scholarship and knowledge production. This includes indexing and online availability of African journals, preferably in open access. This would contribute to easy access and dissemination of knowledge developed in Africa, both on the continent and globally.

African higher education systems that are already integrated in international research networks – as in South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt and Cameroon – need to play a prominent role in expanding intra-African networks and collaborations and connecting other African countries to international research networks and collaborative opportunities that they belong to (Vieira & Cerdeira, 2022). In this way, the continent could see the expansion of multilateral international collaborations while also strengthening intra-African research collaborations between African partners in these collaborations. Furthermore, African institutions need to focus on the expansion of collaborations with the African academic diaspora around the world. This way, links with African scholars in various diaspora will be strengthened and their capacity will be utilised for the revitalisation of the African knowledge project, higher education and internationalisation (Jowi, 2012; Zeleza, 2012). African diaspora scholars can also lead the process of changing the way their institutions outside the African continent engage with Africa, pushing for a more fair and equitable engagement that is based on mutual respect and underpinned by the plurality of knowledges.

Due to the high costs of travel on the African continent, which can often take up much of the research budgets available to African academics and institutions, there is a need to invest in and expand virtual platforms and online modes of research collaboration and academic engagement. This could contribute to the expansion of virtual international engagements and internationalisation of research and curricula at African universities. There are also considerable challenges that must be overcome in this area, including the equipment, digital infrastructure and the high costs of fast and reliable internet

connectivity and data on the continent. However, this is an area that requires investment by governments, donors, higher education systems and institutions if intra-African research collaboration is to be strengthened and expanded.

8. Conclusion

Intra-African research collaboration is key for the promotion of research priorities and development of solutions that are relevant to the African continent and its people. However, over the past few decades, intra-African collaborations in higher education have been miniscule when compared to the partnerships and collaborations between African institutions and their counterparts in the global North and elsewhere in the world. In this chapter, we have highlighted historical, structural and systemic reasons behind the lack of intra-African research collaboration. These include the colonial roots of higher education, Eurocentric hegemony, postcolonial neglect and disinvestment in research and higher education in Africa, international funding structures that favour institutions from the global North, and the geopolitics of knowledge and global power dynamics that influence international collaboration and knowledge development. We have also unpacked structural, systemic and institutional changes that need to take place on the continent in order to strengthen African higher education and intra-African research collaboration. This includes strategic initiatives on the continental, regional and national levels aimed at increasing research partnerships and collaborations within the African continent. To achieve this, mobilisation of continental funding for strengthening higher education and research institutions and enabling research collaboration in Africa will be key.

Decolonisation of knowledge is of utmost importance if African institutions are to dismantle Eurocentric hegemony and become grounded in the African historical and contemporary realities while also drawing from the plurality of global knowledges (Zezeza, 2012). This way, African

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universities would become sites of relevant research and scholarship rooted in African realities, knowledge and ways of knowing, while also engaging extensively with scholars and knowledges from the rest of the world. Internationalisation of higher education can drive the expansion of intra-African partnerships and collaborations. However, for this to happen, internationalisation in Africa needs to be reconceptualised and redefined based on the complex and distinctive African contexts and realities (see Heleta & Chasi, 2022). Contextually relevant internationalisation needs to focus on the expansion and strengthening of the African knowledge project and intra-African collaborations and engagements, while at the same time engaging and collaborating with other parts of the world and their knowledge systems.

To make this a reality, internationalisation scholars and practitioners on the African continent must strengthen their own engagement and collaboration and find ways to expand intra-African partnerships in higher education. More research is needed on the reconceptualisation of internationalisation in Africa, including the possible need for different concepts and definitions that are informed by regional or national challenges, needs and priorities in diverse African settings. Research is also needed on the ways intra-African collaboration in higher education can overcome linguistic and other barriers on the continent, while at the same time promoting African indigenous languages in higher education. We need to know more about successful intra-African research collaborations, as well as the challenges African researchers face when they collaborate with their counterparts on the continent. Finally, more work and research are needed on the ways the global North's hegemonies in higher education, research and knowledge production and dissemination can be dismantled while at the same time promoting horizontal internationalisation of higher education underpinned by the plurality of knowledge and ways of knowing and thinking about the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).

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