

## **NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES**

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Prof. Genevieve Mwayuli  
The Catholic University of Eastern Africa  
Member of ACUHIAM Scientific Committee

### **1.0 Introduction**

Realizing that Education is at the centre for attainment of UN Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals and appreciating that “one is too small a number to achieve greatness” (John Maxwell) and “If you want to walk Fast, walk Alone If you want to walk Far, walk together” () networks, collaborations and partnerships have become norms in the present day globalized society. A network is a closely connected team of people, companies, institutions that exchange information. A collaboration is a purposeful relationship in which all parties strategically choose to cooperate in order to achieve shared or overlapping objectives. Universities should/ and are at the forefront in this exercise as they are expected to generate new ideas and techniques and find new materials and processes for carrying out their mandate of teaching, research and community service. Networking and collaboration is now actively promoted with a view to breaking down the barriers between universities. Collaboration occurs at various levels including individuals, groups, departments, institutions, sectors and countries. Collaborations could be between South-North, south-south, east-west etc. Some collaboration is formal, much more is informal. This paper takes a general outlook at collaboration of universities, possible areas of collaboration, drawing out benefits and challenges with a view to identifying weaknesses in ACUHIAM, and find ways of strengthening the association.

Borrowing from Plucknett and Smith (1984), successful networks are grounded on seven main principles: clearly defined and realistic agenda; a problem that is widely shared and in which there is strong self-interest involved; a willingness on the part of participants to commit resources, such as personnel and facilities; a possibility for outside funding to facilitate the birth of the proposed network and to ensure its functioning for the first few years; sufficient scientific caliber of the participants to ensure that contributions will be made and finally, strong and efficient leaders who have the confidence of the participants.

Areas of networking and collaboration between universities in Africa would include: Research, capacity building; staff & student exchange; credit transfer; publications, cross border education, finding innovative ways of addressing common regional problems needing common/ homegrown solutions such as technology, health, environment, energy, climate, innovation, social structures rural activities, farm and non-farm agricultural production, that can effectively create occupation for most new job seekers. Other common problems include civil conflict, migration and refugee issues, poor economic growth, widening gap between the few rich and the many poor citizens all

these being cemented by corruption. The common challenge is how Catholic universities through appropriate programs can produce graduates with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to address these and bring about positive change in Africa. Collaborative research networks have the greatest potential to upgrade skills of participants and to fortify the ability of developing countries to conduct research designed to overcome constraints to holistic development. In collaborative research networks, individuals pool their resources and talents, participate in planning and policy formulation. Information exchange, material exchange or scientific consultation networks are key. Six professional advantages provided by viable collaborative research networks include concentration on important, widespread problems; providing access to new information and methodologies hence improving efficiency and proficiency in production and use of data; avoiding redundancy; saving time; increasing training possibilities; and creating opportunities to develop leadership skills.

Indeed networks and collaboration are eye-openers and bring new inspirations and perspectives to the parties involved and have a lot of multiplier effects. Example: CUEA Faculty of Science collaboration with the College of Science, University of Notre Dame: Following a visit in 2012 to this institution by the then Dean and one of members of the Faculty, the following are some the results:

- First-hand experience on the curricular at the college
- Staff development opportunity in Financial Mathematics for junior academic staff
- Visiting Professor in Patent Law came for a trimester and did seminars
- Research project on Health Economics begun in 2016- Faculty of Science
- Research Project with Faculty of Education- joint research project being developed
- Community service Dandora project of the Faculty of Science which extended to Kibera.
- Laboratory equipment donation.

## **2.0 Benefits of Collaborations**

Networking and collaboration bring undoubted benefits as well as significant challenges. There needs to be means therefore of systematically appraising all the costs and benefits of collaborations. Collaboration is normally a good thing from a wider public perspective. Modern research is increasingly complex and demands an ever-widening range of skills. Often, no single individual will possess all the knowledge, skills and techniques required. Collaboration therefore enables the sharing of knowledge, skills and techniques. One person may be good at constructing, operating and maintaining scientific instrumentation and another at analyzing the data produced. Collaboration thus ensures a more effective use of their talents. From collaborations in principle, research can be carried out more effectively and efficiently. Academia should be involved in collaborative research activities for assertion of their intellectual role. This collaboration of researchers and research groups is expected to improve their local, regional and international standing and enhance their access to research resources.

Collaboration is one way of transferring new knowledge, especially tacit knowledge. Research requires not only scientific and technical expertise, but also the social and management skills

needed to work as part of a team, soft skills not taught in the classroom but are best acquired in collaborative activities. The act of collaborating may be a source of stimulation and creativity. A cross-fertilization of ideas is enhanced which may in turn generate new insights or perspectives that individuals, working on their own as individual universities or researchers, would not have grasped (or grasped as quickly) [Hoch, 1987; Mulkay, 1972]. Collaboration provides opportunity for universities to benchmark against each other, improve quality in their systems and enhance employability of their graduates beyond national borders. In the globalized society we live in, international collaboration programs help by providing students with ability to study, work and travel in an international capacity. In regional collaboration students will recognize attractive opportunities closer to home, with fewer alienating cultural challenges. In addition, collaboration can enhance the visibility of the universities. Networking has been enhanced with modern ICT such as Skype<sup>®</sup>, teleconferencing and social media.

Another area is internationalization of research and development and boosting international cooperation with the possibility of improving the number of joint patents between African countries. With regard to this African universities should infuse Intellectual Property Rights into university curriculum. Researchers in Africa should be made literate in intellectual property law that protects innovators by giving their innovations proprietary and monetary value. An equally important issue in relation to the defense of intellectual property in Africa and the promotion of innovation is the compatibility of policies. Trends in global intellectual property rights should be well understood.

### **3.0 Challenges of Collaborations**

In financial terms, although collaboration may result in savings for research funding agencies, it nevertheless entails some additional costs. Travel and subsistence costs are incurred as researchers move from one location to another. Equipment and material may also have to be transported (Schild, 1996). Once moved, the instrumentation may need to be carefully set up again, perhaps requiring the assistance of technicians from the original institution, incurring further costs. Of course these days there is hangout technology that alleviating some of these challenges

Collaboration brings certain costs in terms of time. Indeed, for many researchers, these may be more important since time is now in certain respects a more valuable resource than funding. Time may have to be spent in preparing a joint proposal or securing joint funds from two or more sponsors, and in jointly defining the research problems and planning the approach. Different parts of the research may be carried out at different locations, again introducing time costs. Time must be spent keeping all the collaborators fully informed of progress as well as deciding who is to do what next. Differences of opinion are almost inevitable and time will be needed to resolve these amicably. Writing up results jointly may also take more time where there are disagreements over the findings and their significance, or over who should be included among the co-authors and in what order they should be listed. Moreover, besides these direct time costs,

there are also such indirect time costs as recovering from the effects of travel (e.g. jet lag), working in an unfamiliar environment, and developing new working and personal relationships with one's collaborators.

Collaboration brings certain challenges in terms of increased administration. If the collaboration is large or spans a considerable distance, it might need more formal management procedures which may create problems of bureaucracy. Even when this is not the case, when difficulties arise, they may nevertheless be blamed on bureaucracy and foster a sense of grievance against other collaborators. In research collaboration, a more formal management structure may also stifle the creativity of the researchers, offsetting the benefits of cross-fertilization of ideas outlined above.

Furthermore, where two or more institutions are collaborating, there is often the problem of reconciling different management cultures, financial systems, international tax laws, rules on intellectual property rights and so on. There may also be differences over reward systems, promotion criteria and time-scales, and even a more general clash of values over what is the most important research/theme/program to pursue, how to carry it out, or over commercial or ethical implications. All these potential differences need to be reconciled if serious problems are not to disrupt the collaboration. Legal status of the collaboration and where its seat of administration/management is domiciled is a further challenge.

**4.0 Association of Catholic Universities and Higher Institutes of Africa and Madagascar (ACUHIAM).** The initiative to found ACUHIAM goes back to the first meeting of Catholic Institutes in Africa which took place in Abidjan (Ivory Coast) from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> October 1989 with the help of the Missiological Institute, Missio-Aachen (Federal Republic of Germany). Objectives of ACUHIAM are to promote academic collaboration among Universities and Institutes concerned; to promote a high level of study and research; to encourage exchange of knowledge through publications, exchange of programmes and of lecturers; to promote an incultured approach in teaching and in research, to share experiences in administrative structures and financial self-support of the Universities and Institutes; to sensitize the local churches and the Episcopal Conferences in view of a firmer commitment to, and a determined support of, the Universities and Institutes of Formation; and to see if the university formation has an impact on the concrete life of people in Africa. The objectives of the collaboration are thus clear and well-articulated right from the initiation of ACUHIAM. So with such noble objectives what actually is the status of the association?

#### **4.1 Successes of ACUHIAM and emerging issues**

ACUHIAM is a continental association 28 years old. What are its success stories? What are its impacts? What issues/challenges have been experienced and are still prevailing?

4.1.1 General Assemblies have been held as per the ACUHIAM Statutes. An ACUHIAM anthem was composed and presented at both the 2014 and 2017 General Assemblies where it was adopted. The anthem is in French and English and will be further interpreted into Portuguese. The ACUHIAM logo has been revised.

Conferences in the past have been held successfully. One planned for Librarians of Catholic universities and higher institutes in Africa and Madagascar however did not take off due to lack of funds.

Emerging issue: Cost sharing of costs, harmonizing representation of the diverse regional language groups in Africa

#### 4.1.2 African Catholic Universities Quality Agency (ACUQA),

The project originated from the ACUHIAM Conference held in November 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya. Members believed that the enhancement of quality assurance is a priority and called upon its members to effectively participate in implementing quality assurance activities. The goals of the project were to create self-supporting and independent quality assurance agency, to develop and implement quality assurance framework to guide institutions in the creation of their quality assurance cultures, to provide training and support for institutions seeking to enhance their quality assurance cultures and to develop quality assurance capacity across the border. St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) developed a proposal and obtained funding in 2008. The duration of the pilot project was from April 2009 to January 2012. In the last phase there was an establishment of the African Catholic Universities Quality Agency (ACUQA). On 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2012 the Agency was registered in Tanzania and it bears Certificate of Incorporation and the Tax Payer Identification Number 119-073-464. Since the agency is registered it has to make yearly returns to the government according to the Laws. After the Agency's registration, a training workshop for Quality Assurance Directors took place from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2013 at St. Augustine University of Tanzania, Mwanza where 12 universities were represented.

ACUQA is an exemplary independent Quality Agency in Africa that could support universities in Quality Assurance systems. Some organizations working for university Quality Assurance systems expressed interest to partner with ACUQA.

Emerging issues: The Agency's Strategic Plan 2014-2017 was prepared and circulated for comments/improvements. The comments received were incorporated into the final draft that was presented in the last General Assembly held in South Africa. The General Assembly approved the strategic plan on condition that it must be translated into French and finally be submitted to the president for final approval. The Executive Committee promised to assist the translation but due to lack of funds up to now the translation has not been done.

The CEO of ACUQA reported at the June 2017 General Assembly that some donors declined to support the strategic plan in 2014 simply because it was not approved by the General Assembly in South Africa. Hence there has not been any activity since 2014 in ACUQA.

4.1.3 ACUHIAM Website which has been inactive for some time has been reactivated.

4.1.4 African Catholic Universities Research Initiative (ACURI), was presented and adopted at the ACUHIAM General Assembly of 2012 in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo. ACURI's pioneer project was to come up with modalities of mainstreaming peace studies and research in Africa's Catholic universities, a need echoed by the General Assemblies held in Mwanza, Tanzania in April 2010, and Kinshasa DRC in June 2012. Proposal for Institutionalizing Education, Training and Research in Peace Studies, was developed by the ACUHIAM Scientific Committee and approved at the General Assembly of July 2014 held in Johannesburg, South Africa. This is a program developed by ACUHIAM Scientific committee with input from USA-CPN, Catholic Relief Service, AMECEA Secretariat. It is important to note that the participation of the CPN, CRS and AMECEA enriched the program to a large extent and really demonstrated that indeed collaboration and networking is a worthwhile endeavor that brings good fruits from the cross fertilization of ideas. At the General Assembly in Johannesburg in 2014 it was resolved that the program be implemented by the CUEA Centre for Social Justice and Ethics with Prof. Mwayuli as the Program Coordinator. Due to infrequent availability of Prof. Mwayuli until January 2017, Mr Richard Kakeeto of CSJE was given the lead role in implementing this program. The ongoing Institute is a fruit of this program.

Emerging issues: A lot however needed to have been done according to the time frames of the initiative. However it is gratifying to note that a number of items in the program are being tackled at this Institute. Piloting universities involvement is still elusive.

At the General Assembly of June 2017 held in Nairobi it was resolved that ACURI be domiciled at CUEA. This was reported to the university Management. The Catholic University of West Africa Abidjan Ivory Coast was given the responsibility to come up with a centre for coordination of Peace and Justice Activities of ACUHIAM and the first assignment was to coordinate the project on Campus Ministry as per the IFCU requirements. The issue here is on follow-up of these resolutions.

4.1.5 Publications of the ACUHIAM Journal/Revue de L'ASUNICAM (ISSN 2220-7554)

Volume I Number 2, Part 1 Year 2010 Catholic Universities in Africa for Peace and Reconciliation: Searching for Root Causes of and Solutions to Violence and Conflicts (2010)

Volume I Number 2, Part 2 Year 2010 Catholic Universities in Africa for Peace and Reconciliation: Searching for Root Causes of and Solutions to Violence and Conflicts (2010)

Volume 2 Number 1, Year 2011: Catholic Universities in Africa: Educating for Holistic and Sustainable Development (2012)\*

Volume 2 Number 2, Year 2011: The Role of Africa's Catholic Universities in the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (2015)\*

Volumes 3 & 4 (in preparation): Ethics and Resources of Africa: Land, Family and Religion

\* Year of publication

Emerging issues: Delay in having timely volumes as is professionally required hence \* above.; frustrations in getting articles for the ACUHIAM Journal. There has been no serious marketing of the Journal, a problem if solved should make publication of the journal self-sustaining. There have been fewer contributions to the Journal articles from Francophone countries and none from the Lucophone countries.

#### **4.2 ACUHIAM Learning from relatively successful networks and collaborations in Africa**

Forming university partnerships is laborious. It is therefore important to identify those that are able to endure in the long term. Developing successful relationships takes a long time, from understanding the culture and goals of each other's institution, to ensuring compatibility in terms of ethics and standards. A few examples of relatively successful partnerships from which ACUHIAM can learn are given below:

4.2.1 Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA): Cooperation and partnership in higher education is exemplified by the establishment IUCEA. IUCEA harmonizes curricula, admission criteria and student/staff exchange among member universities in East Africa. IUCEA has its headquarters in Kampala, Uganda.

4.2.2 ACURI is modeled after the Lake Victoria Research Initiative (VicRes). VicRes was established in 2002 through a series of consultations involving academics, researchers and stakeholders from universities and research organizations in East Africa, and SIDA/Sarec the funders. It was designed to offer opportunity to the East African Community partner states to undertake research that would contribute towards sustainable livelihoods in the Lake Victoria Basin. Day to day operations of VicRes were carried out by a lean Secretariat (VicSec composed of VicRes Coordinator, Project Officer and Project Assistant). The Secretariat housed within IUCEA headquarters in Kampala, Uganda was assisted by Policy and Advisory Committee (VicPac) and Scientific Committee (VicSac) within the general framework of IUCEA and Lake Victoria Basin. Annual Forum (AF) synonymous to an annual general meeting was held each year to advice on the progress of the project, sharing research findings and results of on-going projects. AF comprised plenary discussions and break out work cluster workshops.

4.2.3 The African Union Commission (AUC) which has its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia chartered Agenda 2063, a bold strategic path spanning another 50 years envisaged to

transform the continent into a prosperous, integrated, secure and peaceful, democratic, and dynamic force in the world. AUC has developed an Africa comprehensive ten-year continental education strategy; Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016 – 2025 CESA 16-25. This strategy is driven by the desire to set up a “qualitative system of education and training to provide the African continent with efficient human resources adapted to African core values and therefore capable of achieving the vision and ambitions of the African Union. AU provided the guiding principles and pillars for its member countries.

AU has come up with an innovative collaboration for addressing the multiple challenges of the Youth in Africa. Some of the challenges are Education Exclusion, Poverty, Armed conflict, Low Literacy rates, unemployment and underemployment, rural-urban migration, illegal migration out of Africa, radicalization. African Union Youth Volunteer Corps AU-YVC is a continental development program that recruits youth volunteers to work in all 54 countries across the African Union. AU-YVC promotes volunteering to deepen the status of young people in Africa as key participants in the delivery of Africa's human development targets and goals. It brings people together to share skills, knowledge, creativity and learning to build a more integrated Continent and by implication strengthen Africa's relevance in the globalized world. The objectives of the AU-YVC are to provide opportunities to young Africans to serve and gain crucial professional experience, soft skills, social competence, international exposure and leadership skills; promote shared values and Pan-Africanism among the upcoming generation. For a long time, Inter-African missions have mainly been limited to sending of peace keeping troops to areas risking war or civil unrest. African soldiers have made a tremendous impact in securing peace and security for fellow brothers and sisters in their respective countries. AU-YVC seeks to replicate this momentum to a civilian setting, whereby African Youth can yet once again be deployed to provide their services in assisting development and attaining the common destiny of a prosperous and peaceful continent.

**4.2.4 Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE):** a pan-African, non-profitable, non-partisan, voluntary, charitable Non-Governmental Organisation born in 1992 and registered in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1993. The management of FAWE is carried out by the General Assembly (the supreme governing body), the Board (with reasonable sub-regional representation) and the Secretariat, (headed by the Executive Director based at the headquarters of FAWE in Nairobi handling the professional and administrative functions of FAWE). FAWE is composed of a network of 34 Chapters in 33 African countries. The National chapters contextualize the objectives of FAWE and focus on influencing education action to reduce gender disparities in access, retention, transition, participation and performance through a range of initiatives. FAWE strives to influence education policies to make them gender responsive. Through gender responsive interventions FAWE demonstrates what works, then pilots, documents and scales up and negotiates for mainstreaming of the successful good practices and in the process influence policy.

Achievements: Using existing institutions and structures, FAWE works at policy, institutional and community levels. Through a Memorandum of Understanding FAWE works with and through the Ministries of Education at all levels in the country to ensure ownership and sustainability of the FAWE programmes. As a result, governments have adopted and continue to adopt gender-positive policies and interventions such as free primary education, re-entry policies for adolescent mothers, FAWE's Centres of Excellence model, *Tuseme* model, gender-responsive pedagogy, Bursary and scholarship programs, sexual maturation and menstruation practices program, STEM program among others. This has led to increased rates of enrolment; retention and completion of school among the youth especially girls.

Partnerships: FAWE works very closely with the Ministry of Education and other education stakeholders, Ministry of health, State Department of Youth & Gender; children's department. FAWE continues to form strong partnership and works in collaboration with UN agencies (such as UNICEF, UNESCO; USAID, UN-Women, UNGEI), ADEA, Plan International, AUC, MasterCard Foundation, Microsoft (The future of Africa and quality education is in technology and it starts now) etc. Individual National chapters also have additional funders depending on how active they are. FAWE which is celebrating its silver jubilee this year has the skills, knowledge, recognition, global trust and experience in preparing the youth for a rapidly changing world and at the same time influencing policies. It has a large collection of alumni who are now at the forefront pushing its agenda.

## **5.0 Suggested way forward for ACUHIAM**

Have a physical permanent secretariat with full time professional staff (like FAWE) and let there be national or regional chapters/clusters for continuous activity. Based on regional proximity to each other or on language groups, this will address the challenges of bureaucracy and legal status of ACUHIAM that have been experienced before as well as enable wider participation in the journal publications. The permanent ACUHIAM Secretariat should be mandated to develop the standards and methodologies to produce a new generation of education data needed to monitor progress and better target policies and resources to the member universities.

Like AU, ACUHIAM should have guiding principles and pillars to enhance achieve its goals and objectives. If this is vested in the Scientific Committee then it is not possible because they are spread thin over the whole continent, meet occasionally (three times a year at most) and nothing seems to be going on until towards approach of the General Assembly. African Union Youth Corps- Could a stable ACUHIAM come up with such an innovative approach through efficient networking?

ACUHIAM to make itself more visible and popularize its activities and bring more collaborators on board from governments, donors and international organizations to civil society organizations, school authorities, teachers, students and their families. ACUHIAM should

continue with zeal to extend its networks and collaboration to other Catholic universities outside Africa. There are a number of important innovations in higher education to learn from, either from the continent itself or elsewhere in the developing world. The Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro for example produces both graduates and enterprises nurtured in the Universities Genesis Institute from which ACUHIAM can learn. It helps society by training students and producing new enterprises. The others are the Earth University in Costa Rica and Strathmore University in Kenya which has strong university-industry linkages.

Lack of commitment to the whole of ACUHIAM from member institutions should be addressed. This apathy is depicted in some of these areas: Not much activity until just before the General Assembly; Follow up of decisions of the General Assembly poor so that it becomes just a theoretical activity; No passion for the association; reluctance in payment of membership fees; ACUHIAM not known as it should be; ACUHIAM Journal---fatigue/burn out for the few people who are active. All these bring to question the sustainability of ACUHIAM. ACUHIAM should get into advocacy; have passion about what it stands for; sell their agenda and bring more networks on board. In this way it would assure inclusion in other regional and global networks/bodies. People tend to make sacrifice for what they perceive as important. Is ACUHIAM important enough for its members to be committed to it both financially and in time amid a lot of competing challenges? There has to be a deliberate move to make ACUHIAM important so that members see its need and why they should be committed to it.

**Concluding remarks: Future of ACUHIAM:** Networking and collaboration between African Catholic universities and with other universities outside Africa is not an option. Africa has some of the most abundant natural resources in the world, many of which are yet to be tapped. These include not just minerals and oil, but also bountiful possibilities for clean energy. Above all Africa has the world's youngest population with 200 million people aged between 15 and 24. This figure will double by 2045 according to the 2012 *African Economic Outlook* report. "If it invests in education and training to develop the potential of its youth, Africa could become one of the most dynamic and productive economies" (AfDB, 2011) Indeed the Potential, the Problem, the Promise in Africa are in these youth comprising more than 20% of the population. Africa's Catholic universities can play a big role through networking and collaboration in achieving this.

Universities in Africa have continued to produce graduates who have served as civil servants as well as the private sector yet many problems prevail. The continent needs Catholic universities working together to produce graduates who are endowed with the knowledge, conscience and attitudes needed for moving the continent forward. As part of this development, primary reforms will be needed in how curricula are designed, programmes of study, pedagogy, site of the universities as well as selection of common university courses that bring out accountability and the virtue of shame for selfishness, corruption and destruction of what God has endowed to man. Catholic Universities in Africa through relevant and diversified programs and working in

partnership are obliged to give to society graduates who are holistically formed to be able to address moral, ethical, social, economic, technological, intellectual and legal issues facing the continent. As our friends and benefactors from outside the continent (a number of who are represented at this Entebbe Institute) come to our assistance, the obligation is on us to network and collaborate as universities as we nurture the youth. ACUHIAM has no option but to rebrand/recommit itself to the noble objectives on which it was founded.

## Bibliography