

Academic Collaboration with the Countries of sub-Saharan Africa

DAAD

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service



1. Summary

Africa is increasingly – due to encouraging economic data – perceived as a continent of opportunities. Simultaneously, a crisis in African education exists: Demographic pressure is impinging on education systems that are not able to meet the current and future needs of the labour market and the challenges of national development, in terms of quality and quantity. If this situation is not quickly remedied, there is a risk that economic and political opportunities will be wasted.

DAAD therefore believes that a German initiative for cooperation with Africa should also (and in particular) involve a broad educational partnership. This strategy paper, based on DAAD's strategic areas of activity, focuses in particular on improving tertiary-level teaching and research as well as further institutional development. Well-performing higher education institutions are the key to the holistic functioning of an education system and are therefore a crucial prerequisite for the development of independent research and development capabilities.

The DAAD strategy for academic cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa is the result of an intensive dialogue process with German and African universities, DAAD alumni, university associations and political organisations in Africa.

Five areas of activity have been identified for 2015-2020:

- a) **Qualifying university lecturers:** through scholarships in Germany and at well-performing universities in sub-Saharan Africa
- b) **Building capacities for graduate education and research** at African universities
- c) **Strengthening universities as effective actors in promoting societal development:** especially through degree programmes that are relevant to the current and future labour markets, applied research and consultancy, knowledge transfer to industry, promoting entrepreneurial commitment among graduates, social and legal expertise and developing a culture of dialogue in civil society
- d) **Facilitating access for German universities to the African continent and disseminating knowledge about Germany in Africa:** building on the existing interest in cooperation and opening up additional opportunities through appropriate funding programmes
- e) **Strengthening synergies and co-operations:** reinforcing the ties between German and African players, especially with Africa's regional university associations (AAU, CAMES, IUCEA and SARUA)

Both established DAAD programmes and new models of cooperation should be used to achieve these objectives. The quantitative and qualitative expansion of the programme portfolio to implement this strategy will be achieved, on the one hand, by reallocating expenditure and, on the other hand, by acquiring new German, African and international donor funds.

2. Background and Framework Conditions for Collaboration with Higher Education Institutions in sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa is currently in a phase of profound socio-economic change. In recent years, the economy has expanded strongly in almost all countries, resulting in high rates of growth across the sub-continent. Current forecasts by the World Bank assume that this trend will continue and will contribute to an average economic growth of around 6 % in the coming years. In some countries, this development is primarily due to the global demand for raw materials, while the basis for sustainable growth in other countries lies in positive developments such as relative political stability, a growing and affluent middle class and an expanding service sector. Africa, for example, already is among the most innovative regions for mobile services worldwide.

At the same time, the efforts of many governments and external partners have contributed to some striking developmental progress, not least in the field of education. As one out of few, the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) – the creation of universal primary education – has recently been marked as ‘on track’ in Africa by the United Nations. Also, despite sustained population growth, the rate of children enrolled in primary schools on the sub-continent has risen by an average of 1.5 % a year since 2000. More and more African countries are offering free and often compulsory secondary education. This further strengthens the socio-economic potential of those countries.

These developments generate new demands and challenges, not least for the African higher education landscape. Given the exponential growth in the numbers of annual graduates and the rising demand for an adequately qualified labour force, the higher education system plays a central role. However, only few countries in the region are currently prepared to meet these new tasks. The higher education sector suffers under the burdens of the past, especially decades of under-funding, dilapidated infrastructure, inadequate human resources from both a qualitative and a quantitative perspective, a lack of young scholars and teachers (often caused by a lack of incentives and a concomitant ‘brain drain’), and, in some cases, direct destruction resulting from armed conflicts. With very few exceptions, the African higher education landscape is currently marked by overcrowded universities despite a low gross enrolment ratio (GER), a lack of financial and human resources, minimal independent research activities, a deficit in political leadership and the lack of quality standards. At the same time, the exploding demand across the continent has led to the emergence of uncountable private and religious higher education institutions, often only partially controlled by their governments. While this has sparked a lively competition in places where previously there was hardly any, it has also created new challenges in terms of quality assurance and funding.

Despite these widespread challenges, the African higher education landscape is highly complex and varies greatly from country to country. Countries such as Nigeria and Sudan have numerous universities, but struggle with a comparatively low quality with regards to teaching and research. South Africa has some globally positioned, well-networked top universities, supplemented by a number of regional universities with a more average quality of teaching. Kenya and Ghana possess relatively well-developed systems, but often their internationally recognised courses suffer from massive numbers of applicants and financial constraints. At the same time, there are a number of states that, apart from a few quality departments or institutes, have no internationally recognisable university system.

Recently, the key developmental role of higher education is increasingly being recognised. After years of neglect, governments and African as well as international organisations are placing more emphasis on the potential of higher education and research. This can be observed in statements by the World Bank as well as by the African Union and is increasingly being reflected in the development strategies of individual countries. The density of universities on the sub-continent has multiplied in recent years, and it is estimated that there are now some 600 accredited tertiary educational institutions. German universities are also increasingly interested in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), there are already more than 400 official partnerships between German and African universities. As a result, the appropriate time has come to reflect on the changing conditions affecting higher education in Africa and their consequences for local and international stakeholders.

3. Strategic Areas of Activity and Initiatives

DAAD will focus on the following five areas in 2015–2020:

- a) **Qualifying university lecturers:** through scholarships in Germany and at well-performing universities in sub-Saharan Africa
- b) **Building capacities for graduate education and research** at African universities
- c) **Strengthening universities as effective actors in promoting societal development:** especially through degree programmes that are relevant to the current and future labour markets, applied research and consultancy, knowledge transfer to industry, promoting entrepreneurial commitment among graduates, social and legal expertise and developing a culture of dialogue in civil society
- d) **Facilitating access for German universities to the African continent and disseminating knowledge about Germany in Africa:** building on the existing interest in cooperation and opening up additional opportunities through appropriate funding programmes
- e) **Strengthening synergies and co-operations:** reinforcing the ties between German and African players, especially with Africa's regional university associations (AAU, CAMES, IUCEA and SARUA)

Many of the initiatives that will contribute to achieving these goals are already in the DAAD programme portfolio. Others are currently in the planning stages or still need to be designed in consultation with donors and African partners. In general, DAAD is already well positioned in sub-Saharan Africa.

The projects and initiatives funded by DAAD are carried out by German and African universities, relying on partnerships and well-established cooperative networks. A further expansion of cooperation can only be achieved if the programmes provide space for the professional and institutional interests of the partners. This will require further discussion on how to turn the strategy into practise.

DAAD has a network of over 25,000 alumni in sub-Saharan Africa. An evaluation of development-related DAAD programmes shows that the alumni are already having a

formative impact on higher education in their countries. In future, more synergies need to be created between DAAD programmes and alumni activities.

On their own, DAAD's initiatives are unable to solve the problems of African universities. This remains the responsibility of the respective governments and higher education institutions. However, the proposed initiatives and activities can complement their work, especially where there is a high demand (e.g. in the training of new higher education lecturers) or serve as a 'beacon' of new standards for modern, internationally networked teaching and research. The state of development of the higher education system and the political will to place priority on higher education will have a significant influence on the success of DAAD's initiatives. The Africa Strategy also contains proposals for targeting talented young people from economically and politically fragile states.

The implementation of these strategic objectives is a process that will be further elaborated in the months to come. In addition, further coordination and exchange with German universities, ministries and African partners will need to take place.

3.1 Qualifying the next generation of university lecturers

Through scholarships for master's and doctoral programmes in Germany or at selected institutions in sub-Saharan Africa DAAD contributes to the training of the next generation of scholars and leaders. In 2012, more than 4,200 students from Africa received DAAD funding, twice the number of 2005. Some of these scholarships were awarded for graduate work to be completed at African higher education institutions.

DAAD's funding portfolio will in future focus even stronger on the training of scholars for teaching and research. This will mainly be done through a massive expansion of scholarship programmes (training programmes in Germany and in Africa), additional co-funded scholarship schemes, establishing graduate schools with doctoral programmes at good African partner universities and promoting opportunities to reintegrate post-doctoral scholars into universities in sub-Saharan Africa. In preparation for their expected employment in the academic setting, DAAD scholarship holders will be trained in higher education didactics, project and university management as part of their doctoral studies. The intended outcome is one thousand additional university lecturers in sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, intra-African mobility of university teachers will be encouraged to allow cross-border co-operation in mentoring future doctoral candidates. In certain regions of sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion of female university lecturers is low. For this target group, a separate programme will be developed, to encourage talented young women to embark on a career in academia. The regional university associations (AAU, CAMES, IUCEA, SARUA) will take a central role in the implementation of these programmes and they have indicated their willingness to be involved in the discussions. Different regional scholarship programmes designed to meet specific developmental needs and that take the priorities of the 'regional economic communities' (REC) into account are also being planned in cooperation with regional partners.

Talented young people from economically and politically fragile African states often do not have access to educational opportunities at an international level. For this reason, a process needs to be developed that will make it possible to identify such talents and develop a customised training programme that can compensate for previous shortcomings (including preparatory programmes such as bridge years at good regional universities, language courses, application training, mentoring and coaching). The goal is to create equal

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opportunities for admission to postgraduate studies or for an application for regular scholarships (including those from DAAD).

3.2 Building capacities for graduate education and research at African universities

Higher education in sub-Saharan Africa can only be sustainably strengthened if local capacities to educate the next generation of university lecturers and researchers are created. In 2008, DAAD successfully launched the 'Centres of African Excellence' programme funded by the Federal Foreign Office, in an attempt to establish centres for the training of future leaders in African universities. Six exemplary projects in the fields of development studies, law, logistics and micro-finance are currently funded at five locations. A significant demand for an expansion of this network in Africa exists. Therefore, the successful model of the 'Centres of African Excellence' and other programmes and projects that promote graduate education should be further expanded in the next years. The preliminary goal is five additional Centres of African Excellence. DAAD also needs to ascertain whether partner governments are willing to co-fund such centres.

The strengthening of research collaboration with African universities shall be implemented through German-African graduate schools and programmes such as 'Welcome to Africa', which was created in 2012 with funding from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

DAAD will, to the extent possible, offer customised solutions for any partner organisation or government that submits specific proposals for cooperation.

3.3 Strengthening universities as effective actors in promoting societal development

Universities can become the driving force for societal development in Africa and agents in fostering dialogue in civil society. To achieve this, degree programmes need to be relevant to the labour market, they need to support the economy through knowledge transfer and the entrepreneurial commitment of their graduates, they need to help address challenges through applied research and appropriate consultancy capacities, and they need to strengthen education and training through modern teacher training. With its wide range of programmes in higher education cooperation, DAAD has effective instruments to support the performance of universities and exemplify the societal relevance of higher education. Successful models from German universities (close interaction with industry, a highly qualified graduate workforce, strength in research) can serve as inspiration within established partnerships in Africa. The University-Business-Partnership Programme, Subject-related Partnerships with Institutions of Higher Education and the Partnerships for the Health Sector in Developing Countries (PAGEL), all funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, will continue to play an important role in the future. New programmes in the field of teacher training (e.g. of vocational teachers) or agricultural sciences should be developed. E-learning modules will also assume a greater role in higher education cooperation.

As part of the 'DIES' programme (Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies), DAAD has established itself – in collaboration with the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) – as an active provider of consulting services and training opportunities to promote quality assurance,

university management and the acquisition of third-party funding in sub-Saharan Africa. These services will continue to support the positive trends in the African higher education landscape and will be supplemented with additional work on issues such as didactics and research management.

DAAD wants to actively contribute to improving the currently insufficient levels of knowledge and data about the state of higher education development in sub-Saharan Africa.

3.4 Facilitating access for German universities to the African continent and disseminating knowledge about Germany in Africa

DAAD offers German students and scholars the opportunity to study, teach and conduct research in Africa. In 2012, more than 2,000 scholarships were awarded for this purpose.

The interest of German universities in cooperating with sub-Saharan Africa has increased in recent years, yet the public perception in Germany is not yet in line with the opportunities the education market in sub-Saharan Africa has to offer. Therefore, DAAD intends to serve and encourage the existing interest by offering cooperation programmes with a focus on promoting research. At the same time, more knowledge about African higher education needs to be generated and disseminated to German universities. This knowledge will create a framework that could allow trans-national education initiatives to be developed also for sub-Saharan Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa is also highly interested in Germany as a partner for education and research. With its presence in Africa, DAAD acts as a nexus for information about German-African cooperation in higher education. Information and knowledge about mutual interests and cooperation opportunities needs to be expanded: A top priority is to establish an additional DAAD branch office in francophone West Africa and three additional DAAD information centres at strategically important locations in the region (e.g. Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania).

The teaching of the German language in sub-Saharan Africa may have a development impact, if career qualifying skills and abilities play a central role in the study of German and the teaching of German as a foreign language (GFL). The network of DAAD-lecturers in sub-Saharan Africa has already kicked off this conversation with some innovative concepts (such as summer schools, continuing education). In the coming years, this focus will be further refined and expanded with a new 'Centre for German and European Studies' as well as additional regular and subject-specific lectureships.

The increase in student numbers in sub-Saharan Africa cannot be solved solely by strengthening the universities, but can also be accommodated by an expansion of the opportunities to study abroad. A growing part of the African middle class can financially afford to study in Germany. Better marketing and special preparation offers should help to bring more self-paying students to Germany. This is yet another contribution to the education of African leaders and the future of German-African cooperation. At the same time, German universities need to be better prepared for African students. Appropriate concepts of assistance should therefore be developed and training opportunities offered. An analysis will be made to identify the three most promising locations for more intensive marketing.

3.5 Strengthening synergies and co-operation

DAAD is not the only organisation that intends to actively contribute to the strengthening of African universities. In Germany, the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), the KfW German development bank, the International Bureau of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Volkswagen Foundation, for example, are all active in sub-Saharan Africa. There are also partnerships between German states and individual countries in Africa (for example, Rhineland-Palatinate and Rwanda) and sister city arrangements. Likewise, certain universities are very strongly committed to the development of higher education on the continent. There needs to be better coordination of these efforts, which not only the universities in sub-Saharan Africa would benefit from, but which would also increase the impact of DAAD initiatives and contribute to a more coherent picture of Germany in sub-Saharan Africa.

At the international level, DAAD is already cooperating with the African Union, UNESCO, the World Bank, and with numerous governments and higher education policy organisations. This cooperation will continue to be intensified in the coming years and made more concrete as additional initiatives are identified and implemented. The topic of supporting centres of excellence for example, requires better international coordination than is currently the case. A common definition of quality standards to ensure that future excellence centres can be identified would be beneficial to all parties involved.

Without close cooperation with local partners and their political as well as practical support, DAAD's work is at risk of being just a small drop in a very large bucket. Together, however, we can make a change by exchange.

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