Policy Directions for Promoting University Research in Tanzania

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Abstract
This paper examines the influence of Tanzania's higher education policy context on promoting research within Tanzanian universities. It focuses both on the prescribed mission of universities and the way in which the government provides funding for the universities in the country. Data were obtained through document analysis and interviews with national higher education policy-makers, as well as senior university leaders and academic staff members sourced from four leading universities. The findings show that the Tanzanian higher education sector operates under a homogeneous university model, wherein each university is prescribed as a research university. Indeed, direct institutional allocation has remained a dominant method of funding universities in general, and research in particular, since Tanzania gained political independence in 1961. The paper, therefore, recommends a reform of the national higher education policy to bridge the gap between policy articulations and implementation on the ground.

Keywords: higher education policy; mission differentiation; research performance-based funding; research-intensive universities; homogeneous university model

Introduction

The cornerstone of a successful higher education system, seeking both to produce ground-breaking knowledge and provide quality education, and in turn, foster the socio-economic growth of a nation, is research. As a result, research increasingly sits at the top of global, regional and national policy agendas, and now constitutes a high-stake undertaking for universities (Leathwood and Read 2013; Cloete et al. 2015; Hladchenko et al. 2016).

Research receives much emphasis and attention in global, regional and national policy agendas and reforms, because it is central to the facilitation of the effective engagement with the teaching and community service functions usually performed by universities. In fact, research produces and preserves knowledge; teaching transmits this knowledge to develop skilled personnel; and community service transfers and applies the knowledge to improve productivity – knowledge valorisation. Thus, for the two functions of teaching and community service to be effectively performed, knowledge must be present; it is the function and duty of research to create or advance this knowledge.

Equally, research is vital for driving socio-economic growth and development, particularly within the present increasingly globalised and competitive knowledge-intensive world. Research, for instance, provides insights and innovative ideas that deepen understandings of various socio-economic phenomena and facilitates the solving of practical problems facing communities (Cloete et al. 2015; Pinheiro and Pillay 2016). Recent studies conducted in the United Kingdom, Malawi and South Africa found that university research is essential to supporting innovation and creating a foundation for national economic development and competitiveness (*cf.,* Kelly et al. 2014; Kruss et al. 2015; Cloete et al. 2015; Hermannsson and Lecca 2016).