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**HOW TO REFORM HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE
REGION ?**

LE DÉBAT DE WATHI

October–December 2017

Introductory note

HOW TO REFORM HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE REGION?

1. Why this theme?

- **Because** a deep and durable transformation of the systems and political, economic, social, environmental and cultural practices in the countries of West Africa and beyond requires the existence and the growth of a critical mass of women and men disposing the knowledge, know-how and capacity to grasp complex situations and to innovate in every domain. Higher education is the key to the formation of these indispensable human resources;
- **Because** the countries of Sub Saharan Africa have the largest proportion of youth aged less than thirty years old in the world. With 70% of the population under 30 years old, only 6% of these youth have access to higher education in relation to the global average, which is 26%. Taking into account the powerful demography and increasing rates of scolarisation at the primary and secondary level, expanding the levels of graduates from higher education while ensuring the quality of the delivered education appears to be the major challenge to the countries in the region;
- **Because** the observation is herein: the higher education system in the region does not fill the role of mentorship which it is meant to: incomplete training, teaching which is unadapted or even completely detached from the realities of the market and its requirements, study conditions which are incompatible with the acquisition of knowledge in most public universities, strikes and recurring tensions which don't result in any significant improvements of the education system;
- **Because** it is urgent to draw lessons of good and bad examples in the region and elsewhere in Africa and in the world to identify the direction for prioritising reforms of the national systems based on precise diagnostics of the problem and identification of opportunities, taking into account not only the societal needs and constantly mutating markets, but also the specificities of a particular region in which the population is especially young;

- **Because** the university system does not take into account the linguistic diversity of the West African region. The integration of the different spaces in the region by an interconnection with the anglophone, francophone and lusophone system in the higher educational system is not yet a reality. The development of mobility for students in the region is a strong vector for reinforcing the integration of the people;
- **Because** the countries in the region, torn between multiple priorities, must find innovative ways of financing their higher education systems in contexts with limited public resources and debates about the dominant role which could be taken by the private sector offered through higher education. The number of enrolled students went from 2.3 million to 5.2 million in Africa between 2000 and 2010.

2. What are the main topics to be explored?

Access to higher education:

- The conditions of access to higher education and the orientation of the graduates
- The organisation of the faculties for the selection of the students
- The process of selection of offers in the training sectors

The determinants of the quality of higher education:

- The roles and responsibilities of the principal actors in the university domain
- The learning conditions in the universities and training schools
- The training, evaluation of teachers and of research
- The evaluation system of the universities and training schools
- The management of administrative personnel in higher education
- The lack of professors in universities
- The servicing and maintenance of infrastructure and equipments

The financing of higher education:

- The budget for higher education in the West African countries
- The financing of higher education: state of affairs, foreign models, options, possible innovations
- Financing of research
- The efficiency and fairness of the system of attribution of scholarships

The organisation of university life:

- The university space and its political and religious influences
- The dining services and the living conditions of students
- The questions of housing and overpopulation in public universities
- University governance and the composition of decision making organs

Training adapted to the demands of the market:

- The adequacy between trainings and the needs of the labour market
- The reformation towards LMD (Licence/Master/Doctorat) and its adaptation to the needs of the job market
- The model of the Bac +5 and the alternative of short and technical training programs

Higher education and the implication of the private sector:

- The introduction of businesses in the higher education system: internships, scholarships, contributions to the content of training
- Partnerships between businesses and universities and schools for private training

International partnerships between West–African universities:

- The countries and the reception facilities for West African students in the world
- International partnerships between universities and graduate school and their added value
- The efficiency and fairness of the allocation of scholarships in the higher education system
- The question of the mobility of students in West Africa

The alternatives to classical modes of training

- Distance education through the internet (MOOCS),
- Certificate programs
- The establishment of African virtual universities, their advantages and disadvantages
- The model of specialised and decentralised universities in the country and the region

3. How to participate in the debate?

- Contributions by experts in the issues discussed are welcome. So are observations, accounts, opinions, and recommendations from all citizens.
- We particularly welcome articles that refer to one or more specific countries, are based on concrete examples and include recommendations for action and reform.
- You can submit short articles (500–1000 words) or longer ones (1500–2000 words). Although the maximum length of a contribution is 2000 words, short articles are more likely to be selected and published by WATHI. All articles must be accessible to the general public, well written and structured.
- Without having to write a structured article, you can send your comments, observations, and recommendations to infowathi@wathi.org. The most relevant contributions will be published on the website.
- You can also submit a short audio or video recording to share your experiences and concrete reform proposals.
- We invite you to send your article with a 50–word biography and preferably a good picture of yourself.

CONTACTS

www.wathi.org

Please send your articles and contributions at: infowathi@wathi.org

The debate is also taking place on WATHI's Facebook and Twitter accounts:

Link to Facebook : <http://on.fb.me/1L2kOSk>

Link to Twitter : https://twitter.com/WATHI_Africa