

AFRICALICS

**THE AFRICAN NETWORK FOR ECONOMICS OF LEARNING, INNOVATION,
NCE BUILDING SYSTEMS**

AFRICALICS OUTREACH EVENT REPORT

Held during 16th Globelics Conference

24 October 2018



Background

The African network of researchers in learning, innovation and competence building systems (AfricaLics) was founded during the Innovation and development workshop that took place in March 2012 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It was envisioned that AfricaLics network can become a strong dynamo for capacity building in the specific field of innovation and economic development, both at the individual, institutional and country levels. This consequently would allow African countries to design policies suitable and responsive to their own needs, and instigate corrective measures to ensure the smooth production, dissemination and use of knowledge for economic development, including poverty alleviation.

Aim of the outreach event

The major aim was to provide a space for scholars to interact on current issues that are relevant to Africa. When AfricaLics was launched in 2012, there were 9 neglected thematic areas that were perceived to be critical towards guiding research in I& D that is contextually relevant to Africa. Since then the context is being shaped by global developments, mainly the SDGs. This informal outreach event focused on stimulating participants' thinking around how Africa's I&D research should respond to the transformational and sustainability goal that these new developments attracts.

The other aim of the event was to expand the network through increased numbers of scholars interacting with the network. The motivation is involving AfricaLics scholars within the region and beyond is paramount because they are the real 'ambassadors' of the network. Discussion therefore focused on how to expand the network's reach in terms of research themes and related activities.

Some questions that informed the discussions include:

- a) How can capacity building in I & D be strengthened and expanded to embrace the transformational agenda in line with the SDGs?
- b) How can we work to develop more formalized collaborations with other research capacity building initiatives and/or innovation and development researchers outside of Africa and the *Globelics* network? The *Science Granting Council Initiative* and the *Transformational Innovation Policy Consortium (TIPC)* are some of the examples.
- c) How can we effectively involve or engage the policy makers, business community and all relevant stakeholders in the capacity building and policy related endeavors?
- d) How can we leverage resources?

Setting the scene topics presented before the discussion

- ❖ Overview/moderation: **Ann Kingiri**

- ❖ What key issues should innovation studies focus on? We aim is to demystify innovation studies to make it more amendable to thematic areas relevant to Africa and easy to apply in research by African scholars (**Presenter: Diran Soumonni**)
- ❖ Expansion of AfricaLics network at National level: key considerations using Ethiopia as an example (**Presenter: Daniel Kitaw**)
- ❖ Developing more formalized collaborations with other research capacity building initiatives key considerations (examples include TIPC, EASA, SGCI) (**Presenter: Bitrina Diyamett**)

Feedback from Participants

Each of this topic elicited different feedback from the audience as follows:

What key issues should innovation studies focus on? The aim was to demystify innovation studies to make it more amendable to thematic areas relevant to Africa and easy to apply in research by African scholars.

- Capacity building; learn to valorize knowledge and capacities, outside academia. Encourage use of practical based capacity building.
 - Capacity in I&D can be strengthened by engaging the knowledge institution through informing them with the SDG goals and allowing them draft training programmes in line with SDG goals
- Investment of resources into innovation studies: Funds exist, they need to be redirected. Donors need to be shown the importance of investing in innovation.
- Encouragement of innovation at all levels. Motivation of individuals from particular Countries to start up NationalLics in their Country
- Innovation needs to be seen in a broader systematic perspective. ST&I should not be the responsibility of one ministry. All ministries are responsible and this should be systematic
- Through increased public engagement in different countries translating policies of I&D into short term realizable and affirm action
- African resources are basically primary commodity and the only way to leverage our resources is to be very innovative to transform our resources to an intermediate and final product
- Studies should give more emphasis to traditional knowledge where Africa has huge potential
- Development of joint research projects on innovation studies applied to African Countries
- Green innovation for industrialization, from agriculture to industry leap frogging
- National policies with clear guidelines for cascading to meso and micro-level
- Finding solutions that actually answer challenges in a contextualized manner

- As a research network, AfricaLics is preoccupied with the micro level innovation. "innovation" is seen as a process to produce technologies. More private sector innovation. The social technical school seeks to bridge the gap
- Establishment of science laboratories in universities
- Increase focus on technology, poverty reduction, agriculture value chain, clean cooking value chain, water & sanitation, clean energy production technology

Expansion of AfricaLics network at National level: key considerations using Ethiopia as an example

- Through knowledge management. Analyzing the skills and capabilities of all AfricaLics members and cluster them. Formal or informal networks can be spontaneously formed from this.
- Mentorship should be encouraged by default. AfricaLics PhD students should be assigned to the scholars who have passed through AfricaLics in the past
- Focus on developing AfricaLics network through robust/ inclusive collaboration with private, public technological firms. In addition, work to develop more formalized collaborations with other capacity building initiative e.g. ministries, states, national summits
- Promote link between African researchers; augmented aid for research; promote knowledge produced
- Collaboration with existing institutes and up-scaling capabilities for sustainability and involvement
- Collaboration with other networks like laffe that focuses on gender
- AfricaLics can collaborate with other notable bodies that share its mission e.g. organization of women in science for the developing world
- Build a database of all existing research within AfricaLics that could be easily accessed for universities outside Africa
- By creating mobility (SRI) of between university departments of innovation of students and staff. Members of SRI should collaborate
- Offering more fellowships, creation of working groups with African universities, development of frugal innovations & informal sector
- Greater awareness creation through social media. Invitation to institutions to AfricaLics events
 - Increase visibility in Africa through social media (constant advertisement)
- Increase mobility of students through problem based projects
 - Through engaging problem based learning. By aligning PhD students research to the SDGs
- PhD collaboration, mobility of staff and PhD grants
- Subscribe and affiliate AfricaLics with research and capacity building institutions
- Organize non-academic events where policy & businesses can interact with AfricaLics
- Seed funding for multiple stakeholder projects (interdisciplinary)

- Increased subscriptions and affiliations
- Strengthen private sector involvement
- "How should AfricaLics and its national chapters be sustainable (especially financially)"? Needs serious attention
- Funding of research in new areas
 - New field of study; psycho-social determinants of innovation adoption and absorptive capacity
- Hosting coordinated networking initiatives
- Inclusion of French speaking Countries; Recommend Dr. Mafani Dosso as AfricaLics Board member to help AfricaLics include French speakers.

Developing more formalized collaborations with other research capacity building initiatives key considerations (examples include TIPC, EASA, SGCI)

- Country specific SDGs. Focus on SDGs i.e. Countries should set their priorities on the SDGs and tailor capacities along priority lines
- Through Collaborations. Start by mapping all networks that have similar concerns as Globelics
 - Collaborate with; ministries, science & technology innovative forums, governments & other stakeholders
 - Increased involvement of private sector
- By conducting policy oriented research. It will be attractive to government and policy makers. Additionally, through connecting policy makers in workshops
- Organize internetwork events & develop internetwork research agenda
- Diversify/ improve communication channels with broad set of stakeholders
- Strengthen the national network with spoken and hub agreement that conduct national conferences and academies
- Through publishing policy briefs of all AfricaLics activities
- Increase dialogue.
 - Create communication activities e.g. funding that support collaboration
 - Create common platform to exchange dialogue
- Web-based information on research groups in Africa for international projects
- Inter-African university collaboration & capacity development
- Initiate university level collaborations, involving scholars in identified fields
- Increasing network for innovation scholars in Africa