

Going Global Africa 2024

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Going Global 2024 Nigeria: main proceedings and recommendations

A summary of the main discussion points and recommendations from the Going Global 2024 conference sessions is provided in the table below:

The future is now: realising the vision of Africa's youth (Plenary 1)

The opening plenary of GG2024 addressed key challenges and innovations in education, focusing on critical issues facing African educational systems. Panellists shared personal insights into the disconnect between curricular content and essential real-world skills, emphasizing the need for critical thinking and problem-solving.

Recommendations:

- tertiary institutions to incorporate entrepreneurship courses into academic programs,
- innovation hubs and incubators should be set up across universities in Africa,
- the establishment of mentorship programs pairing students with experienced entrepreneurs can be effective,
- organising hackathons and competitions to challenge students and build their capacity to become job creators,
- facilitating internships with established businesses.

Partnerships for Progress: equipping young people to change the world (Plenary 2)

Recommendations:

Higher education institutions must play a pivotal role in promoting sustainability and preparing students to become global citizens who can address both local and global challenges.

The curriculum should be reformed to reflect the rapidly changing global landscape, ensuring students are equipped with the skills to tackle future challenges, especially in the African context.

Collaboration among institutions, industries, and policymakers is essential for creating a transformative educational system that meets the needs of the 21st century.

Governments and universities must work together to ensure that policies align with the goals of sustainable development and that sufficient resources are allocated to education.

Climate change education for green jobs and climate-responsive tertiary education institutions

Recommendations:

Climate technology investments are increasing generally but not significantly in Africa. This has implications for youth development and the continent's ability to respond to climate change as it unfolds.

The session recommended that youth entrepreneurs are capacitated and engaged as a crucial step to tackling climate change issues in Africa.

Additional recommendations:

curriculum reform:

Universities must rethink their teaching methods and curricula to ensure they address the challenges of the future. This includes incorporating interdisciplinary approaches and promoting the teaching of global citizenship, leadership, and sustainability.

student involvement in governance:

It was agreed that students should be more involved in decision-making processes, especially regarding curriculum development and institutional policies.

international partnerships and networking:

The importance of fostering international partnerships and networks was emphasized, as these can help create collaborative solutions to global challenges. Institutions should also focus on fostering collaboration within Africa.

government collaboration:

Governments must align their policies with the educational needs of the future. This includes increasing investment in education and removing policy barriers that hinder the progress of education reform.

focus on real-world problem-solving:

Universities should prioritize hands-on, project-based learning that empowers students to address real-world issues. Education should move beyond theory and focus on practical solutions.

emphasis on critical thinking and ethics:

Universities must instill a culture of ethical thinking and critical analysis in students, preparing them to be leaders capable of driving positive change in their communities and the world.

The session explored global trends and their implications for tertiary education, focusing on the challenges and opportunities in preparing students for an uncertain future. It examined the need to reinvent university systems and ensure equitable access to education in an increasingly connected and complex world, zooming in on the following issues:

- the future of tertiary education requires adaptation to technological advancements, with an emphasis on personalized, inclusive, and sustainable learning models,
- universities need to equip students with technical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills to thrive in an uncertain future,
- Cross-border partnerships and policy innovation are essential for overcoming the digital divide and ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities,
- there is a growing need for universities to focus on entrepreneurship and job creation, transforming Africa's demographic challenges into opportunities for innovation and growth.

Recommendations:

- curriculum innovation: educational systems must embrace competency-based and experiential learning approaches to equip students with future-ready skills,
- bridging the skills gap: Universities, governments, and industries should collaborate on curriculum modernization, industry partnerships, and flexible teaching methods to address the rapidly evolving job market,
- technological integration: there is an urgent need to invest in AI, digital platforms, and virtual learning environments to expand access to education and improve teaching effectiveness,
- policy priorities: policymakers in lower-income regions must focus on financial support, inclusive policies, and fostering openness to facilitate the equitable adoption of technology in education,
- inclusivity and gender balance: future panels and educational policies must address gender and disability disparities, ensuring that all voices are represented in the discourse on the future of education.

The future of Lifelong learning with a focus on TVET

The session was about investments in human development and leadership skills, focusing on core skills like problem-solving and leadership training.

Recommendations:

- the alignment with state needs should be strengthened ensuring higher education engagement with all relevant ministries to maximise impact,
- technology and Innovation are key to lifelong learning with an emphasis on building AI models that cater to educational goals and incorporating design thinking to ensure technology is fit for purpose,
- inclusivity in education should be prioritised with equal opportunities for women and measures to accommodate diverse needs e.g. through part-time and weekend studies,
- to champion technical and entrepreneurial skills, ongoing support for the start, growth, and maturity of businesses through technical and entrepreneurial training is paramount,
- a system that engages higher education, TVET, and relevant ministries in a unified approach is required,
- the alignment of qualification standards should be given attention, e.g. through a system that recognises micro-credentials and qualification standards that are aligned with open distance and e-learning.

Closing the gender gap

Gender equality is not a tick-box exercise but requires systemic and generational change. Although progress has been made in Africa, the session emphasised that there is still much more to do to achieve true gender parity in higher education and other sectors.

Recommendations:

- encouragement and mentorship for women to navigate structural barriers.
- reducing entry requirements for women in STEM and providing fully funded scholarships for high-performing undergraduates,
- acknowledgement of the existing gender gap and advocating for policies in higher education,
- intentional efforts in mentorship, listening to women's needs, providing access to funding, and career guidance,
- fixing systemic issues, building confidence, and providing support for opportunities,
- a multi-stakeholder and ecosystem approach to gender equality, promoting collaboration at the national level and avoiding duplication,
- achieving gender equality requires systemic changes, intentional efforts in policy and practice, and collaboration across multiple stakeholders. Progress has been made, but ongoing efforts are necessary to address structural

barriers, support women's career development, and ensure equitable opportunities in higher education and beyond.

Knowledge diplomacy (Learning Lab)

The discussions in this session highlighted the challenges faced by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in engaging in diplomacy, the importance of decolonization, and the need for more research and clarification on the topic.

Discussion points:

- knowledge diplomacy involves leveraging academic collaboration to address global challenges. It is seen to enhance cultural understanding and foster global citizenship,
- knowledge diplomacy is linked to soft power through the creation and dissemination of knowledge. It involves mutual benefits and the enhancement of a country's influence through academic partnerships,
- higher education Institutions face challenges in creating equitable partnerships and navigating power dynamics. Issues around intellectual property and commercialization are significant barriers,
- decolonization is a critical aspect of knowledge diplomacy, emphasizing the need to address historical power imbalances. Negative application of knowledge diplomacy can resemble neo-colonialism and be extractive, accentuating power dynamics.

In conclusion, the session underscored the importance of recognizing and addressing power dynamics in knowledge diplomacy, ensuring equitable and genuine partnerships, and being mindful of geopolitical contexts. It highlighted the need for more discerning partner selection, avoiding neo-colonial practices, and focusing on social purpose and values in international collaborations.

Catalysing system reform and innovation in Higher Education

With a Focus on lessons from the FCDO-funded SPHEIR programme, the session was about system reform in Africa, emphasising that is not about copying and pasting solutions from elsewhere. System reform success lies in adapting approaches to address specific local challenges.

Recommendations:

- leveraging evidence to drive impact- evidence-led initiatives ensure relevance, encourage local buy-in, and create sustainable impact,
- placing gender at the core- gender disparities persist across the region. Reform initiatives must mainstream gender considerations from the start - not as an afterthought. This shapes everything from policy development to implementation,

- inclusive progress- "none should be left behind" is not just a saying – it is a necessity for genuine transformation. The approach to narrowing gender gaps must be comprehensive and deliberate,
- equitable partnership principles- moving beyond transactional relationships is crucial. True partnerships embed equity, fostered co-creation, and established non-hierarchical governance. This balanced approach drives collective ownership and mutual benefit.

A multi-stakeholder approach is mandatory- system transformation demands coordinated effort. Government, academia, industry, and civil society must work together. No single entity can drive meaningful change alone.

The session focussed on the importance of ensuring equitable sustainable partnerships between UK HEIs and their African counterparts. It was agreed that this would require intentional strategic planning as follows:

- ensuring goal alignment and relevance of the partnership goals to all partnering institutions and all relevant stakeholders,
- building trust and open communication: ensuring in-person communication and clear lines of communication,
- clear and co-created policies to govern partnership agreements.
- openness to learning as the partnership matures and being able to readjust to ensure partnerships remain equitable and balanced.

Financial viability, risk appetite and ROIs in partnerships need to be well thought through and openly discussed, avoiding clarifying financial benefits for both parties is often a threat to the sustainability of partnerships.

Bridging the Gap between Higher Education and Industry in Africa

The session was a civil debate between panellists from academia and industry on who should lead conversations to bridge the gap between higher education and industry. The discussion surfaced the following key recommendations:

- practical engagement emphasis: internships and real-world experiences are crucial for student readiness; curricula should include industry-relevant skills,
- industry collaboration importance: the industry has a pivotal role to play in shaping educational programs and the universities must ensure that graduates are equipped with skills aligned with market demands,
- partnerships as a necessity for sustainable development: establish ongoing dialogues and collaborations between academia and industry for sustainable development and employability improvements.

The session explored how EdTech and AI solutions could have great potential to transform education in Africa, making it more affordable and accessible to larger numbers of students. By leveraging technology, speakers agreed that traditional barriers such as infrastructure, teacher shortages, resource scarcity, etc can be overcome. A key point was that the success of technological interventions depends on adopting models that suit the African context.

Recommendations:

- promoting digital skills on campuses nationwide is crucial for future-ready students, just as the early Internet era,
- encouraging educational institutions to invest in cutting-edge technologies, fostering new industries and reducing income disparities is a priority,
- creating a universal AI course for all university students, ensuring accessibility regardless of their academic focus could be a game changer,
- relatedly, increasing awareness about ethical AI practices among students and faculty to prevent potential misuse in educational settings.

Preparing Young People for the evolving world of work: employability, entrepreneurship, and enterprise development

The session addressed crucial issues surrounding youth unemployment and the need for innovative approaches to enhance employability and entrepreneurial spirit. Discussions highlighted a systemic disconnect as a root cause of youth unemployment, advocating for a 'co-inspire' strategy to bridge this gap.

Recommendations:

- implementing inclusive policies and frameworks advocating for youth in entrepreneurship,
- developing effective communication strategies for youth development goals
- considering flexible tax policies for beginning entrepreneurs,
- allocating funds for business incubators,
- aligning policies across different ministries to support enterprise development,
- creating space in academic offers for student creativity and innovation,
- incorporating practical, hands-on experiences into entrepreneurship education.

Transitioning to the world of work: the importance of career services and placement

The session deliberated on the role of tertiary education in preparing students for life beyond their studies, emphasizing that career services should always be an integral part of the university's mission.

Recommendations:

- career services need to address soft skills as well as technical skills. They should be seen as a means of embedding good practice in terms of timeliness, dress code and general attitude – it all makes a difference,
- career services should be a vector to translate the needs of the industry into curricular changes and course design,

- career services are a ‘shared responsibility’ between universities, students, parents and employers – we are all in this together,
- lack of awareness of opportunities is a key challenge, highlighting the need to drive up engagement with career services,
- industry-led workshops and alumni networking offer huge potential, even better if this can be brought into the institution,
- employers should ‘engage’ with students and not consider themselves as doing students a ‘favour’.

What changes are needed for displaced populations to access tertiary education?

The session on refugee education focused on the pressing issues surrounding the global displacement crisis, emphasizing the plight of over 122 million forcibly displaced individuals, with a particular spotlight on Nigeria’s education challenges amid Boko Haram insurgencies.

Recommendations:

- displaced people should be factored into core development initiatives,
- there is a critical need for improved access to education, as only 1.8% of refugees in Nigeria currently access tertiary education due to barriers like funding and limited scholarship opportunities,
- the role of technology in enhancing learning outcomes and the potential of open distance and e-learning to support refugee education is a key consideration for addressing these issues,
- advocating for partnerships with mobile companies and local universities to develop adaptive learning programs and provide fee waivers,
- prioritise community-based learning, career counselling, and tailored support for refugees, alongside initiatives to improve information sharing regarding scholarship opportunities in remote areas.

Skill levies in Africa (TVET)

The session focussed on the importance of identifying skill needs through collaboration with industry experts.

Recommendations

- funding and gender issues: exploring funding mechanisms to support TVET students and promoting female participation in male-dominated fields,
- have progressive policies to create an enabling environment for implementation: not just having policies for the now, but policies that give room for refinement with a complementary enabling environment to ensure that these policies can be implemented effectively,
- sustained collaboration: government, private sectors and communities should work together in perpetuity to drive sustainable change,

- evidence-based implementation: having data to back up what's working and what's not working,
- engaging young people: this is key as they are the end users and reference group,
- employee engagement: engagement with the employers is key as they are the ones that demand these skills from the employees,
- political will: this is key as it is difficult to maintain and grow TVET institutions without government commitment,
- action plan and strategy development: developing strategies to improve the attractiveness of TVET programs to youth and reduce the dropout rates is key,
- industry collaborations: engaging industry experts to collaborate in curriculum development for TVET programs should be a focus.

Maximising impact through Tertiary Education Partnerships: what does it take to make these truly transformational?

The session focussed on the importance of creating equitable partnerships that respect both parties' values and goals, particularly in the context of building opportunities for young Africans.

Recommendations:

- the need for clear communication and a structured approach to ensure all parties involved understand the partnership's objectives and processes,
- the significance of having clear conflict resolution processes in place to address challenges that may arise during partnerships,
- the importance of ensuring that the results of partnerships are transparent, just, and fair for all involved,
- the need for reliable data to support and prove the success of partnership initiatives,
- the essential components for effective partnerships, include shared vision, alignment of goals, leadership, and the role of institutions in ensuring success.

Additional recommendations:

- partnerships should create tangible benefits for all parties, including institutions, students, and the broader community. These partnerships must be designed with equity in mind, ensuring that both sides contribute and gain fairly,
- strong leadership at both the institutional and governmental levels is crucial for the success of tertiary education partnerships. Universities must commit to long-term vision and alignment of goals, while leaders should foster a culture of collaboration,
- clear and open communication, along with effective conflict resolution structures, are essential for navigating the complexities of international partnerships,

- the government's role in facilitating partnerships through policy, legal frameworks, and infrastructure support is fundamental,
- partnerships can be more sustainable by aligning them with the long-term goals of all stakeholders. Universities should not only look for short-term wins but also think about how to ensure continuity and growth in the years to come,
- the importance of defining success from the outset of a partnership should be considered a goal,
- using data and evidence to assess the impact of partnerships is a priority as it ensures that the outcomes are measurable and aligned with the goals set at the beginning.

Unlocking Africa's youth potential through international education partnerships (learning labs)

The session explored the challenges and opportunities for enhancing Africa's youth potential through equitable international education partnerships. The British Council Building Equitable Partnerships in Africa (BEPA) research findings were presented.

Recommendations:

- involving African partners in leadership roles and addressing local needs were highlighted as essential steps to ensure long-term sustainability, fostering trust, respect and openness,
- key strategies to unlock youth potential include amplifying youth voices, addressing local contexts, and ensuring mutual benefits in international partnerships and inclusive decision-making in partnership design,
- sustainable funding: strategies to overcome funding challenges included diversifying funding sources, leveraging student creativity, and carving out unique niches for institutions,
- discussions around youth employment revealed the need for educational reforms, particularly in curriculum design. A focus on skills development, mindset change, and career services were identified as critical factors in preparing youth for the workforce,
- the need to tailor course content to societal needs, along with fostering creativity in university funding and operations, was also stressed,
- encourage youth advisory boards and feedback systems to ensure youth voices are integrated into the design and implementation of educational partnerships,
- develop strategies to enhance youth decision-making power, particularly in the design of international partnerships and programs,
- universities should align their curricula with societal needs and ensure that practical skills and entrepreneurial opportunities are central to academic programs,
- strengthen career services and introduce flexible teaching methods, such as problem-based learning, to better prepare youth for the job market.

- explore diverse funding models, moving away from over-dependence on government funding. institutions should leverage student creativity and internal generation of resources,
- increase collaboration between the private sector and government entities to ensure the long-term sustainability of partnerships,
- continue researching youth needs and contextual barriers to ensure that policies and partnerships are responsive to real-time challenges faced by African youth.

A collaborative approach to achieving excellence: the role of quality assurance and regulation within the Africa Centres of Excellence project

The session provided valuable insights into the transformative role that quality assurance and regulation play in Higher Education transformation, reinforcing the importance of collaborative, localized approaches to achieving excellence in African higher education. The discussions were anchored on the Africa Centres of Excellence project as a replicable model.

Recommendations:

- quality assurance is a catalyst for internal improvements; therefore, it is crucial to strengthen quality assurance frameworks through self-evaluations, consistent benchmarking, and accreditation processes, with a focus on ensuring alignment with international standards while respecting local educational contexts,
- on tracking and measuring impact: It is essential to implement systems for tracking outcomes, such as patents, job creation, and employment opportunities, as part of the ongoing evaluation and reporting process.