

ABSTRACT

Higher education training is pivotal for socio-economic development, impacting economic, social, cultural, and political spheres. However, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Africa face challenges including inadequate funding, low enrollment capacities, and rigid organizational structures. Financial constraints hinder innovation and quality education, while the rapid increase in enrollment strains resources. Additionally, disconnect between university curricula and labor market demands results in graduates lacking relevant skills. The objective of this paper was to delve into how Egerton University has attempted to overcome the barriers over time in its efforts to transform lives through quality education. Egerton University has significantly contributed to higher education in Kenya by increasing access to education, generating knowledge through extensive research, mentoring other institutions and enhancing collaborative approaches in conducting demand driven research for societal impact, supporting entrepreneurship aimed at job creation for the young people, among others. Cognizant of the great demand for graduates with requisite skills for the job market, the university has been keen on curriculum review/development and ensuring support structures and policies are in place to maintain its relevance in the education space. Through prioritizing transparency, inclusivity, and academic excellence, the university has created an environment conducive to learning, innovation, and community engagement. Additionally, initiatives in gender and inclusion mainstreaming, revenue diversification, entrepreneurship, and staff capacity building have enabled Egerton University to create an inclusive and sustainable academic environment that fosters growth, innovation, and societal impact. This paper also highlights comprehensive recommendations to other institutions of higher learning aimed at enhancing overall effectiveness, relevance, and impact within their communities and beyond. Since education, research and outreach/community engagement are a key mandate of universities, HEIs should strive training at skilled graduates who meet societal demand in efforts to address youth unemployment in Africa. HEIs should strengthen collaborations with industries in identifying curriculum gaps and review of the same to remain relevant. Capacity building of faculty members is also key to encourage student-centred learning. Innovative approaches in teaching are also required to ensure quality of education is not compromised amidst the expanding enrolment in institutions of higher learning. Embracing technology and improving infrastructure to support inclusive learning is also essential. Equipping students with entrepreneurial skills would potentially empower the youth to be job creators which can be important in contributing to reducing youth unemployment in Africa.