

EDITORIAL:

The IJAHE's Decade Long Successful Journey

Introduction

This Volume 10, Issue Number 3 marks the conclusion of a decade long journey of the *International Journal of African Higher Education* (IJAHE). Published by the International Network for Higher Education in Africa (INHEA) based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in South Africa, it was launched in 2014 with the support of multiple regional and international players interested in advancing higher education in Africa.

The IJAHE was launched to advance knowledge and promote research, as well as provide a forum for policy discussion and analysis on diverse higher education issues on the African continent. At its launch, the journal aspired to contribute to shaping discourses in the sector and reporting new frontiers as well as creating a nexus for communication and networking among a wide array of researchers, students, academicians, policy makers and policy analysts interested in and concerned with higher education in Africa.

As a multidisciplinary journal, the IJAHE has published research and review articles on a multitude of higher education topics in regular and special issues that are comparative and theme-based in nature. It has published issues on the theory and practice of African higher education not only by scholars but also practitioners on the continent and beyond and has served as a platform for senior and emerging scholars alike.

Recognition

In 2018, four years into its existence, the journal received recognition from the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) which accredits periodicals both nationally and internationally. Another four years later in 2022, it was indexed by African Journals Online (AJOL).

In March 2023, it received recognition from Scopus – one of the most authoritative scholarly databases in the world. This achievement is testimony to its vigorous pursuit of excellence and is a noteworthy

accomplishment for a typical African journal, which often faces challenges that threaten its existence. Later on, it entered into an agreement with EBSCO, another major player in the business of published works.

The IJAHE's journey started with publishing just one issue per year as an English language journal with abstracts in French. It grew into producing two issues per year for several years; and at present, stands at three issues per year.

For its inaugural issue, the journal published commissioned articles on several key and contemporary issues in higher education in Africa and beyond, authored by leading authorities from around the world by invitation only. Likewise, it recruited leading and well-established authorities in higher education as it formed its International Advisory Board. The IJAHE made a strategic decision to recruit a "who's who" in African higher education from universities, research centres, government ministries, funding organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from across Africa and globally. In further consolidating this approach, the publisher partnered with the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College, one of the leading such centres in the world, where the journal continues to be hosted.

These approaches have contributed to elevating the stature of the IJAHE and have been instrumental in garnering recognition from potential contributors and other stakeholders. As a result, it has attracted contributors from Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America, and North America, with the majority hailing from Africa.

Profile

The IJAHE maintains and encourages diverse methodological, philosophical/ideological, and theoretical approaches. It welcomes discourses from multiple schools of thought to advance a rich and robust body of knowledge in the higher education sector. However, the journal has received a disproportionate number of certain approaches. For instance, the manuscripts it receives and the papers it ultimately publishes tend to be more qualitative than quantitative.

Table 1: Profile of IJAHE (as at 8 June 2024)

Articles published (including this issue)	130
Regular Issue articles	83
Special Issue articles	41
Co-authored articles	63
Manuscript submission	901
Abstract views	117,639
PDF downloads (full article views)	91,238

Regular Issues

In the past ten years, the journal received more than 900 manuscripts from contributors in over 30 countries across Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America, and North America. The majority came from South Africa, followed distantly by submissions from the US, Uganda, Ghana, and Ethiopia. However, only about 10 percent of the manuscripts it received were published in its 12 regular issues.

The profile of the publication over the decade reveals a rich variety of issues that can be organised under two dozen thematic areas. Figure one shows that internationalisation and collaboration were the most prevalent theme, followed by general higher education issues (in Africa and developing countries), gender, diversity, and inclusion, quality assurance and management, migration and diaspora engagement, financing, and research.

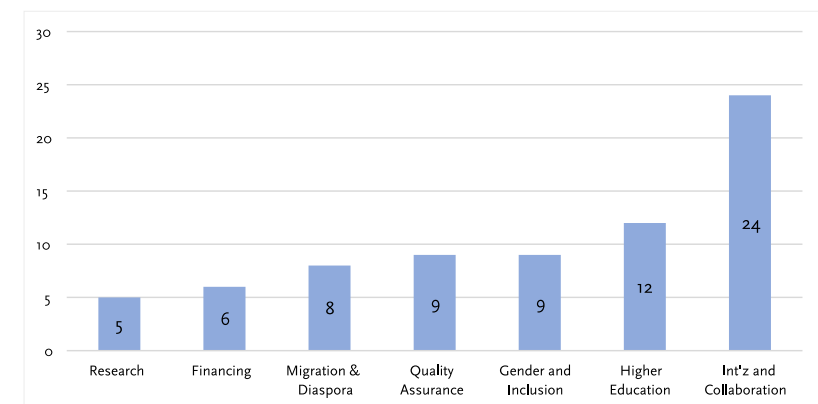


Figure 1: Distribution of thematic areas published by the IJAHE over a decade.

Special Issues

In the past decade, the journal published five special issues based on thematic and comparative studies by leading academics and researchers on the subject from around the world. Most of the papers for the special issues emanated from conferences organised in Africa on topical and thematic higher education issues. These brought together some of the leading authorities in higher education from around the world, especially Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the United States.

The first special issue in 2016 undertook a deep analysis and critique of a seminal book *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*, published in 2000 under the auspices of the World Bank and UNESCO. The study was steered by 14 Task Force members; two study directors; 10 funders; and nearly 100 prominent individuals from around the world who “made substantive contributions”. We were of the view that, for a ground-breaking document such as “*Peril and Promise* to be impactful – and garner the requisite attention it deserves against the entrenched policy deficit of the time”, it needed to be anchored in the convening powers of two of the world’s leading multilateral institutions – the World Bank and UNESCO – buttressed by leading experts from a host of academic, geographical, economic, political, and developmental divides in the world. In featuring a special issue of IJAHE on this ostensibly seminal document with divergent perspectives from multiple corners, we endeavoured to gauge its significance and contribution to the development of higher education in the world in general and Africa in particular. While we continue to participate enthusiastically in the positive higher education policy discourse since *Peril and Promise* (and subsequent documents), we affirmed that, “we should be more proactive in subjecting existing and emerging ones to a systematic and rigorous intellectual dialogue” (Teferra, 2016).

The second special issue was dedicated to the Commemoration of the Establishment of the Higher Education Forum for Africa, Asia and Latin America (HEFAALA) at UKZN organised under the banner “Continental Realities, International Imperatives” in 2016. The First International Symposium of HEFAALA took place in Durban, South Africa on 20 and 21 August 2016 organised by the INHEA, the publisher of this journal, with funding support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The symposium attracted senior and early career academics,

experts, policy advisors, policy makers and development partners from the three continents and beyond. In recognition of the enormous common challenges as well as potential and growing opportunities in these regions, HEFAALA was established to promote mutually constructive and proactive engagements in higher education to foster dialogue, advance research and promote favourable policies in higher education. This special issue featured many countries in Africa and in Asia and Latin America, including Brazil, China, Malaysia, and Mexico, and a number of cross cutting issues. In virtually all cases, similar issues and developments were evident across the three continents, further emphasising the need for closer engagement and cooperation among these regions (Teferra, 2018).

In the third special issue, the IJAHE published the outcome of the Second HEFAALA Symposium which took place in July 2019, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, organised by the INHEA in cooperation with Saint Mary’s University and a number other national and international organisations. Under the theme “Internationalisation of Higher Education in the New Era of World (Dis)Order” it was organised in appreciation of the world “grappling with, excited about and concerned with disruptive technologies; Artificial Intelligence; the Fourth Industrial Revolution; social media; genetic engineering; superbugs; food insecurity; climate change; global warming; unilateralism; nationalism and so on – key issues of, and for, higher education. The gravity as well as the complexity of critical global issues prompted the choice of the word “Dis(ordered)” in its title.” The symposium generated nine articles contributed by experts in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the US, including “The Irrelevance of the Re-Configured Definition of Internationalisation to the Global South: Intention Versus Coercion”. This article challenged the latest definition of internationalisation and became the subject of a series of pieces in *University World News*. The debate involved the definition’s architects, who embedded ‘intentionality’ in the definition, and a critic who argued vigorously against it, stating that the essence of a definition “need not be about therapeutic advocacy, nor should it be a restorative discourse, however benevolent or unanimous” (Teferra 2020).

The fourth special issue was an outcome of a major conference, “Continental Forum on the Role of the Diaspora in Higher Education, Research, and Innovation in Africa” organised in November 2019 by

the Institute of African Studies, Carleton University, Canada, with the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) of the African Union (AU) through funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York at the Union's headquarters in Addis Ababa. The forum attracted participants from a range of relevant stakeholders including the AU Commission, AU member states' focal agencies for the diaspora and education, government ministries and officials, African diaspora programme administrators, and educational leaders, including professional associations and think tanks such as the Association of African Universities (AAU), the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), and the Pan-African Doctoral Academy (PADA). It drew more than 80 participants from numerous countries including Algeria, Botswana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia, as well as Australia, Canada, China, Germany, India, the United Kingdom and the US. The forum explored the perspectives of government ministers and vice-chancellors on the role and potential of the academic diaspora to contribute to teaching and research in higher education institutions. University leaders discussed what can and cannot be achieved through engagements with diaspora academics and what they see as the drivers of, and constraints to, success. The special issue produced six articles that included a comparative perspective from India (Teferra, 2021).

The fifth special issue emerged from the Third HEFAALA Symposium that took place on 27 and 28 April 2022 in Addis Ababa under the theme "Academic Collaboration in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the Post-COVID World". The symposium had four panels under the following sub-themes: Academic Collaboration: Imperatives and Modalities; Impact and Relevance of Academic/Research Collaboration; Mobility and Intellectual Diaspora; and Challenges and Opportunities of Academic Collaboration. They featured some of the leading authorities in the fields drawn largely from Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as Australia, Canada, Europe and the US. The symposium was integrated with the 20th International Conference on Private Higher Education in Africa under the theme "Embracing New Realities and Paradigms: Africa's Higher Education Response" and masterclass workshops under the theme "Building Leadership of Young Academics:

The Power of Academic Collaboration" which were mainly sponsored by the Mastercard Foundation. This issue contained eight, mostly jointly authored, articles by experts from multiple continents. There was near unanimity – and a renewed call – for South-South collaboration which is often sustained through the intervention of sources and forces in the North.

It was noted that, although much has been said about the need to change the paradigm in terms of collaboration, commensurate follow up action has been lacking. Accordingly, the need for more progressive discourses on academic collaboration in the three regions was emphasised. It was further noted that the 'polygamous' nature of collaborations, particularly in the context of Africa, may require deeper and more extensive analysis of the dominant mode of research and academic collaboration in the interests of the global community, particularly those in the Global South (Teferra, 2022a; 2022b).

It is in recognition of this dominant discourse – and part of the effort to counter it – that the Africa Charter for Transformative Research Collaborations has been recently developed and widely endorsed by multiple stakeholders in both the Global South and the North. The Charter, which is one of the key outcomes of the Conference of Rectors, Vice-Chancellors and Presidents of African Universities (COREVIP) in July 2023 in Windhoek, Namibia, under the theme "Advancing Excellence in African Higher Education", discussed a range of critical challenges facing the sector with a proposal for collaborations that would "serve a more just and richer, pluriversal global scientific effort across the natural and social sciences, arts and humanities, in which Africa takes its rightful place" (Edwin, 2023).

Support, Recognition and Acquisition

The IJAHE provides immediate open access (OA) to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports greater global exchange of knowledge. This is particularly significant to the audience in the South, especially Africa where considerable challenges and barriers in accessing knowledge are widespread. Furthermore, readers do not have to create an account in order to access issues of the journal. The IJAHE charges neither article processing

charges (APCs) nor submission charges; nor does it impose embargo periods.

The journal has received financial, technical, and administrative support from multiple sources including UKZN. The support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York has been particularly instrumental in financially sustaining it for nearly a decade and also raising its credibility internationally. Since the culmination of the corporation's support, the Editor-in-Chief has been financially supporting the journal through the resources he generates from financial awards for his research productivity, a distinct South African model (and UKZN's approach) to advance research.

These interventions and contributions – by an external funder, other institutions, and an individual – have enabled the journal to remain fully open-access and subscription-free, achieving what is known in the industry as Gold Standard. However, without additional external support, it may be difficult to sustain as a fully open periodical with Gold status in the long run, a nagging reality that diminishes access for the large majority of African consumers who already grapple with accessibility issues.

Following the IJAHE's recognition by SCOPUS, it has been approached by a number of acquisition agents, including both private and multinational publishers. A few proposed sustaining the editorial arrangements with a different financial model, which would translate to subscription-based access, dismantling the open-access platform, and imposing fees.

These acquisition interests and a change in the modality of access that will impose fees have been disregarded, for now. This situation highlights the need for a mechanism to provide sustained support for such journals as vital and "equitable" conduits in advancing not only dissemination of knowledge, but also its generation.

It is reassuring to learn of a recent study that assessed the challenges and needs of the publishing community of Diamond Open Access journals, periodicals like the IJAHE that do not charge any fees for either authors or readers. On the basis of this review, Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL), AJOL (African Journals Online) and WACREN (the West and Central African Research and Education Network) invited African organisations – legal entities that own OA journals and where

editorial teams are based – to submit a proposal for funding made possible by Wellcome Trust.

Such interventions that support OA journals will be key to countering the scourge of the 'Volume 1 Number 1' syndrome that typically afflicts the African knowledge landscape and hinders journals' sustainability. These efforts should be actively pursued by all those interested in and concerned with advancing the African knowledge domain.

Conclusion

It is fairly easy to launch a journal these days, but sustaining it is a different matter altogether. The literature on scholarly publishing in Africa is replete with examples of the numerous challenges that undermine the emergence and sustainability of successful journals.

One of the most intractable challenges remains the review process, as is the case with most bona fide journals in the scholarly publishing landscape today. This task is typically performed on a pro bono basis, with no obligation. While the IJAHE now enjoys a healthy influx of manuscripts and sound recognition, the challenge in the reviewer's corner persists.

At its launch, the journal underscored its commitment to serve as an independent and unbiased forum that accommodates a wide variety of perspectives and analyses, which are solid in their formulation and organisation, in the service of the community interested in advancing higher education on the continent. It has been a vigorously independent platform, entertaining a rich array of methodological, philosophical, and epistemological discourses, paradigms, and perspectives.

As we celebrate the end of an arduous but successful decade, we look forward to continuing our service to a host of emerging and existing communities of practice bound by common interest, concern, role, mandate, and profession with renewed vigour and dedication. We are determined to maintain this commitment well into the future.

Professor Damtew Teferra
Editor-in-Chief
 June 2024

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