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**L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle  
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century  
A África e os desafios do Século XXI  
إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين**

**21<sup>st</sup> Century 'Academic Imperialism', Internationalization of  
Higher Education and threats to indigenization of Research and  
Innovation for Development in African Universities**

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## **Abstract**

'Can Africa Claim the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' (2000), is the title of a World Bank publication, produced at the eve of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, supposedly to analyse various challenges that Africa needed to address to overcome underdevelopment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Chapter four of the publication dealing with issues of human development largely analyses trends in basic education participation and the challenges in the health sector posed by HIV/Aids. Interestingly, higher education in Africa, its contribution to human and social development, and its capacity to engineer processes of economic and social development in Africa is not acknowledged. Less than a decade into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, literature acknowledging the importance of higher education in solving Africa's development challenges started to emerge, starting with the publication of the same World Bank's(2002) 'Constructing Knowledge societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education'. Increasingly, an old phenomena, 'internationalization of higher education' has been packaged and sold as the magic that will increase the visibility of African universities in areas such as Research and Development, and increase the contribution that the institutions are making to the development of Africa, and open channels for Africa to benefit from the global stock of scientific knowledge. The problem with internationalization is the dualisms that accompany its marketing. In North America and the European Union, it is packaged as part of international trade that allows developed countries to generate revenues by admitting foreign students to their campuses or setting offshore campuses in developing countries. Within developing countries, especially those in Africa, it is packaged as a phenomena that the countries and institutions have to embrace- and this packaging is sometimes accompanied promises of research networking, capacity building and partnerships-that may go contrary to locally initiated processes of indigenizing Research and innovation in African universities, such as those led by the African Union and other regional higher education Networks in Africa. These modes of internationalization have not been deeply analyzed, especially with regard to the flow and direction of the nature of knowledge and its relevance to local development needs. The key challenge to African Universities in the age of internationalization is to explore how academic programs can be aligned to support economic development, the eradication of poverty and sustainable use of natural resources. Here research and knowledge becomes critical. Hence, if internationalization of higher education has to be reciprocal process, it has to contribute to a situation where knowledge creation in the institutions is based on Africa's research needs.

Instead of transferring western models of Research and Development to African Universities, focus by African Universities should be on forms of internationalization and knowledge mobility that embrace elements of locality, taking into consideration of the persisting cultural and local knowledge. This paper will try to make sense of these processes, and in particular the potentials and perils they present in building local capacity for Research and innovation within relevant African Contexts.