EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY
EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PURPOSE

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PURPOSE ON THE OVERSIGHT ACTIVITY TO ASSESS THE PROGRESS MADE BY THE INTER-UNIVERSITY COUNCIL FOR EAST AFRICA IN THE HARMONIZATION OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE EAC

6TH – 9TH SEPTEMBER 2021

Clerk's Chambers
EALA Headquarters, 3rd Floor
EAC Headquarters
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List of Acronyms

ACE   African Centers of Excellence

EACHEA   East Africa Common Higher Education Area

EASTECO   East African Science & Technology Commission

EAQAN   Quality Assurance Network for Higher Education

EAQFHE)   East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education

IUCEA   Inter University Council for East Africa

KDU   Kyungdong University

MAPRONANO   Centre of Materials, Product Development & Nanotechnology

MaRCCI   Makerere University Regional Centre for Crop Improvement

TVET   Technical and Vocational Education and Training

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) is one of the organs of the East African Community established under article 9 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community. The treaty bestows upon the Assembly three cardinal functions: Legislation, Oversight, and Representation. The Assembly, to a reasonable extent, exercises its legislative function through its Committees.

The Committee on General Purpose is mandated with among others, on matters related to health, gender, population and Development, and the Budget function.
Annex 5 (f) of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly provides for the specific functions of the committee on General Purpose, which include but are not limited to, oversight of the work of the EAC and Sectoral Committee emanating from the following provisions of the treaty, though not restricted or limited to them.

a) Chapter Sixteen – co-operation in the Development of Human Resources Science and technology;

b) Chapter Twenty-One - Health, Social and Cultural activities.

c) Chapter Twenty-two - enhancing the role of women in socio-economic development; and

d) the pre-budgeting functions.

2.0   BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to Article 102 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community, the Partner States undertook concerted measures to foster co-operation in education and training within the Community. Further to the Treaty provisions, the 18th Ordinary Summit of EAC Heads of State of the East African Community that took place on 20th May 2017 declared the EAC as a Common Higher Education Area in order to harmonize and enhance the quality of education in the region. The Heads of state directed the Council to operationalize the transformation. The process of harmonization of higher education in East Africa constitutes establishment of a harmonized regional quality assurance system that provides appropriate quality assurance guidelines, quality assessment tools, procedures and standards, and benchmarks for academic programmes. To facilitate

the regional integration agenda and process, particularly the free movement of human resources across countries within the region and outside, the East African Partner States identified the harmonization of education curriculum, standards, assessment, and evaluation of education programs as a priority. It should be noted that harmonization does not necessarily mean complete uniformity of systems but the similarity in all the aforementioned aspects.

3.0   OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTIVITY

The principal objective of the meeting was to assess the progress made by IUCEA in the harmonization of education systems, training curricula, examination, certification, and accreditation of institutions in the East African Community. The specific objectives of the activity were to:

a) assess the status of harmonization of higher education systems in EAC, the impact of the ongoing harmonization process, and the establishment of centers of excellence at Makerere University;
b) assess the challenges facing IUCEA; and
c) explore the possible interventions to overcome these challenges.

4.0   METHODOLOGY

During the oversight activity, the Committee;

I. Held an interactive meeting with the management of IUCEA;
II. Held an interactive meeting with the Vice-chancellor of Makerere University; and
III. Paid a visit to Makerere University Centers of excellence namely Makerere University Regional Centre for Crop Improvement (MaRCCI) and Centre of Materials, Product Development & Nanotechnology (MAPRONANO).

5.0   VISIT TO IUCEA

During the visit to IUCEA the committee interacted with management of IUCEA and the following presentations were made:

Dr. Joseph Cosam, the Quality Assurance Officer informed the Committee that after the collapse of the first East African Community (EAC) in 1977, the three universities namely Nairobi, Dar es salaam and Makerere continued to cooperate under the umbrella of the Inter-University Committee, which in 1980 was transformed into the current Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA).

After the establishment of the EAC in 1999 IUCEA was given a broader mandate of coordinating the development of higher education and research in EAC in order to promote sustainable socio-economic development and regional integration.

The Committee was further informed that, the admission of the Republics of Rwanda and Burundi into EAC in 2007 saw its higher education institutions join IUCEA membership programmes.

The Committee was informed that the IUCEA has registered an upward trend in its membership due to other higher education institutions in the initial EAC Partner States of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda joining. This has brought the number of the current membership to 133 including both public and private higher education institutions. This number is expected to increase. The number is expected to increase significantly with the demand for access to higher education in the region continuing to increase, triggered by the corresponding expansion of basic education in all countries in East Africa.

Conferring to the IUCEA strategic plan 2016 to 2021, the meeting was informed that the following had been prioritized;

    i)   Advocating for and fostering the implementation of the EAC Common Higher Education Area;

    ii)   Establishing and implementing university leadership training programmes in the region for a world class postgraduate supervision, teaching, and learning;

    iii)   Establishing and implementing a regional information hub for integrated higher education;

    iv)   Advocating for a digital learning infrastructure that focuses on enhancing quality and innovation of teaching and learning in higher learning institutions in EAC;

    v)   Developing a regional research and innovation agenda for Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) in collaboration with stakeholders that caters to a balance between knowledge generation and product/policy innovation; and

    vi)   Strengthening the Institutional Capacity and Governance of Inter-University Council for East Africa to discharge its mandate effectively and efficiently.

It was noted that since 2012, IUCEA entered into a partnership with the East African Business Council to ensure that the higher institutions are doing in terms of teaching, research and innovation are getting input from the private sector.

Furthermore, IUCEA collaborated with EASTECO to establish the Science and Technology innovation journal as well as the Science and, Technology and Innovation Conference.

The conference provides an avenue for disseminating scientific research and technological findings. This is also to note that the 2nd conference will take place from 22nd to 25th October 2021 in Bujumbura, Burundi.

With regard to the IUCEA scholarship scheme, the committee was informed of the following;

1. The support to young talented female scientists to become future leaders. This is Eastern and Southern Africa higher education centers of excellence project aimed at supporting young talented female scientists to become future leaders;

2. The Support to Lecturers/Tutors of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes to study in Top Class Chinese Universities. These are Masters, PhD and fellowship. This is an East African skills programme for transformation and regional integration;

3. The non-repayable grant worth EUR 5 million for 5 years (scalable to EUR 10 million). This EAC Scholarship programme is an agreement that was signed between the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the EAC to offer financial support for academically skilled but disadvantaged masters students focusing on Mathematics, Informatics, Science, Technology (MIST) or Business Science. Under this scheme, the First batch of 60 (out of a total of 157) scholars were selected and reported and the second batch of 60 (out of a total of 641) scholars were selected and the majority of them have reported;

4. The Kyungdong University (KDU) Scholarships, South Korea. This offers 30 undergraduate scholarships each year for five years. It mainly focuses on Smart Computing (ICT), Hospitality Management (Tourism), and Business AdministrationThis scholarship target undergraduate studies where students are, financed with; Tuition fees and accommodation catered for by KDU;

5. BMZ (Germany) funded scholarship. This covers tuition fees, monthly allowance, rent assistance and financial assistance for studies and research is implemented by GIZ and DAAD in partnership with IUCEA. The offer is for masters' studies in embedded and mobile systems (EMos); and

6. The Sustainable scholarships programme for East Africa, acceptable at IUCEA member universities. This is where each member university waives fees for at

least 1 student of each per EAC Partner State. Under this scheme, IUCEA provides administrative and management supportwhile Parents provide stipends for participating students. This programme was approved by IUCEA during its Annual meeting held in June 2019.

In regard to the status of harmonisation of higher education systems in the EAC the Committee was further informed by IUCEA that the drive for harmonization of higher education in EAC came into force in July 2010 after the establishment of the EAC Common Market Protocol which prompted the need to harmonize higher education systems in the Community to among others enable the operationalization of Article 11 of the Protocol which provides for Facilitation of easy mobility of learners and labour across Partner State borders.

Harmonization of higher education entails the establishment of regional systems that facilitate comparability of higher education systems in the East African Community Partner States.

It was noted that IUCEA put in place some strategies for harmonization of higher education as follows;

1. Setting regional higher education benchmarks and standards based on national and international practices;
2. Mainstreaming the regional benchmarks and standards to national and institutional systems;
3. Building capacity for operationalization of the system and its sustainability; and
4. Stakeholder participation is provided for and promoted at every step and stage of the process.

The Committee was informed that during the 18th Summit of the EAC Heads of State in May 20, 2017, in the United Republic of Tanzania the EAC was declared a common higher education area. The objective is to transform East Africa into a Common Higher Education Area characterized by comparable, compatible, coherent, and harmonized systems of higher education thereby facilitating free mobility of students, staff, programme, and institutions, and mutual recognition of qualifications.

With regard to the mandate, the Committee was further informed that IUCEA was to coordinate the operationalization of the common higher education area while the Council of Ministers was to provide oversight. The Commissions and Councils for Higher

Education were to make follow up with Higher Education institutions at national levels.

The Committee was further informed of the East African Common Higher Education Area (EACHEA) Building Blocks which included the following;

1. Regional quality assurance system;
2. East African Qualification Framework for Higher Education, (EAQFHE) this is a convergence platform for harmonization of higher education and training systems and levels for mutual recognition of qualifications among the EAC Partner States, thereby enabling free movement of students and labour in the Partner States;
3. East African Quality Assurance Network for Higher Education, (EAQAN) this is a network of quality assurance practitioners in East Africa aimed at promoting capacity building and sharing of quality assurance practices in the region;
4. Staff and students' mobility policies including an EAC harmonized fees structure model; and
5. Regional Accreditation Systems (Quality Based) for Academic Programmes.

The Committee was also informed about the objective of African Centers of Excellence (ACEs) II which is to strengthen selected Eastern and Southern African higher education institutions to deliver quality post-graduate education and build collaborative research capacity in high-growth priority sectors. Furthermore, the committee was informed of the project's components which include;

1. Strengthening Africa Centers of Excellence (ACEs) in Regional Priority Areas.
2. Capacity Building Support to ACEs through Regional Interventions (Implemented by IUCEA).
3. Facilitation, Coordination, and Administration of Project Implementation (Implemented by IUCEA).

It was noted that the projects target was to enroll more than 3,500 graduate students in the regional development priority areas, out of which more than 700 will be Ph.D. students and more than 1,000 are female students. It published about 1,500 journal articles. It further launched more than 300 research collaborations with the private sector and other institutions and it was envisaged that it would generate almost US$30 million in external revenue. The ACE II project has made significant progress towards achieving its development objective of delivering quality postgraduate education and building collaborative research capacity in high-growth priority sectors.

The Committee noted the following key achievements;

1. Regional quality assurance system. In this instance, a handbook for quality assurance in Higher Education "Roadmap to Quality", which is a user-friendly handbook meant for higher education institutions and national commissions/councils for higher education in the EAC Partner States. The handbook was developed based on the existing national benchmarks, standards and systems, and on international practices;
2. The regional programme benchmarks are developed based on learning outcomes, skills, and competency. These are guiding tools for higher education institutions in curriculum design;
3. Tools enabling National Regulatory Agencies to assess the quality of the academic programmes based on regional standards;
4. Promotion of harmonization of the academic programme in the region;
5. Enhancing staff and student mobility across the region;
6. Partner States support rendered to IUCEA to enable it to undertake its mandate; and
7. Headquarters premises for IUCEA situated on 5 acres of land on Kyambogo Hill provided by the Government of the Republic of Uganda

The meeting was informed that there exists a common framework of reference guiding higher education institutions and national commissions/councils for higher/university education in developing and practicing a common quality assurance culture. The framework of reference is in line with the regional aspirations for a harmonized higher education system, and international developments in quality assurance.

Notwithstanding the progress IUCEA was making, it was noted that some of the challenges currently facing the Institution were:
1. Inadequate human resources. However, it was noted that the recruitment process for various positions in the EAC was ongoing;
2. Delay in remittances of funds by the EAC Partner States has affected the implementation of some tasks at IUCEA;
3. Unsettled matter relating to the IUCEA Houses at Kololo which is still waiting for the government of Uganda to resolve; and
4. Non-harmonization of the education curriculum in Partner States.

5.1 VISIT TO MAKERERE UNIVERSITY CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

The Committee visited the Centers of Excellence at Makerere University where they were received by the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe. Makerere University hosts two centers which include: –

1)   Makerere University Regional Centre for Crop Improvement (MaRCCI); and

2)   Centre of Materials, Product Development & Nanotechnology (MAPRONANO).

During the visit Dr. Richard Edema the Director of Makerere University Regional Centre for Crop Improvement (MaRCCI) informed the Committee of the following;

1. MaRCCI's goal is to train plant breeders who can use cutting-edge science to develop and deliver improved crop varieties;
2. MaRCCI's crop improvement research is mainly in plant breeding with a focus on two climate resilient crops – sorghum and cowpea. Improved crop varieties result in higher production and improved food, nutrition; and
3. MaRCCI Strategic Areas of investment include among others; Crop improvement and research; Student training; Staff development, Seed systems program, Local & regional partnership in research & teaching, and Resource mobilization strategies

The Committee was informed of the benefits of the center of excellence to Makerere as an institution, nation and the continent as follows:

1. A greater fulfillment of Makerere's Mission of education, research, outreach in support of national and regional economic development

2. Enhanced Reputation (enhanced resource mobilization, student recruitment)

3. Improvement of facilities, equipment (provided by WB-ACE & other sources)

4. Obtaining additional grants through MaRCCI;

5. Increased numbers of students enrolled in MaRCCI & generating income through tuition money

6. Developing quality seed;

7. Educating highly-skilled specialists;

8. Modeling higher education methodology;

9. Enhancing the reputation of Makerere University; and

10. Addressing food security, especially for rural areas that are drought prone or fighting crop diseases and Africa at large;

As regard to the Centre of Materials, Product Development & Nanotechnology (MAPRONANO) the Director, Prof. John Baptist Kirabira informed the Committee of the Center's objective as follows;

1. To increase capacity of research and training materials engineering and product development.

2. To enhance teaching and training in Nanotechnology and Nanomedicine.

3. To promote linkage among academics, industry practitioners, and policymakers.

4. To promote research spins offs for industrial development.

The Committee was informed that MAPRONANO had developed several innovations including a diesel engine fully made locally in partnership with local artisans. Master's students did the engine design while the undergraduates did the production processes with guidance from the lecturers.

The Committee was further informed, that MAPRONANO had initiated the development of several products including an antibacterial nanocoated cloth mask and a diagnostic rapid test kit for detection of the COVID 19 virus in saliva which are in the final stages of development.

The Committee noted the following as some of the areas of collaboration with the EAC:

1. Regional/International accreditation and harmonization of Academic Programs;

2. Commercialization of innovations and spin-offs from the Center;

3. Support in the uptake of technologies developed by the industry; and

4. Sustainability of the Center beyond the World Bank project funding.

6.0   Observations

1) The centers of excellence are largely funded by donors. Some of the concerns are whether such projects can continue to operate in order to achieve their purpose in the event donors withdraw their support.

2) The Committee observed that the improved crop varieties result in higher production and improved food, nutrition, and income security in the region.

3) There is limited investment in research and innovation in EAC Partner States.

7.0   Recommendations

1) MaRCCI needs to collaborate with the other EAC Partner States to establish more seedling banks in the region.
2) Higher institutions should create platforms for the exchange of knowledge and ideas both regionally and internationally.
3) There is a need to add value to Agricultural products to create more employment, increase income leading to sustainable economic growth in the region.
4) There is need to invest in research and innovation. Partner state higher
5) institutions of learning need to develop legal frameworks to break barriers to research and innovation.
6) Universities need to develop vocational training institutes to develop skills and create employment opportunities for the youth.
7) Makerere University should embrace Kiswahili as a language of instruction.

8.0   GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

1. The Committee observed that IUCEA provides various EAC Scholarship programmes. This has helped to establish an academic collaboration between universities/institutions within the EAC Region by encouraging students to study in countries other than their own. The programme has offered a comprehensive package including scholarships for Master's programmes, internships, mentoring, networking events, and further leadership training activities. The scholarship has supported Master's students in Mathematics, Engineering, Informatics, Science, Technology, and Business Science.

2. The Committee observed that some Partner States have not submitted their proposals to the amendments to the IUCEA Protocol with the exception of the Republic of Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The 31st Council of Ministers had directed the EAC Secretariat to submit the proposed amendments to the IUCEA Protocol to the Partner States for consultation. The 39th Council of Ministers directed the Partner States to submit comments to the Secretariat by 31st January 2020.

3. The Committee is concerned over the long outstanding unsettled Inter-University Council for East Africa Kololo Houses problem. The unresolved dispute of ownership over IUCEA's two houses located on plot 83/85 has been ongoing for the last 20 years.

4. The Committee observed that IUCEA is mainly funded through contributions by the Partner States. This is augmented by contributions from member universities and grants from strategic partners. However, the Remittance of funds from the Partner States and the member universities has been slow and this has led to an accumulation of arrears and consequently delay in implementation of various strategic interventions.

5. Relatedly, despite the increase in the number of staff and expanded responsibility, such as the provision of technical support to the operationalization of the EACHEA, IUCEA has been requested to operate on a zero-budget increase.

6. The Committee observed that many East Africans who have completed any form of education are unemployed. Despite having many sectors in the region with huge employment potential, the big skills gap is partly responsible for the high unemployment especially among the youth in the region.

7. The Committee observed the different tuition fees for students charged by higher Institutions in the EAC Partner States. This poses a challenge in promoting cross-border student mobility in the region;

8. The Committee observed with concern the inadequate institutional visibility at national, regional, and international level. The Increased demand for higher education at national, regional, and global levels makes IUCEA an important institution to support national and regionally coordinated strategies for fostering higher education and research development in the region.

9. The Committee was observed that IUCEA is currently implementing the staff exchange programme which involves staff moving from one institution to another for a fixed period across institutions in the Partner States. The staff exchange programme is a strategic intervention for enhancing sharing of human resources among universities in the EAC, geared to promoting regional integration. The pro-

gramme further aims at strengthening inter university cooperation through academic mobility and enhancing the quality of teaching and research as well as effective community services activities in universities in the East African Community.

10. The Committee observed that due to the outbreak of COVID 19, IUCEA has incorporated a system for online studies for its programmes.

9.0   RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above, the Committee would like to make the following recommendations:

1. The Committee recommends to the Assembly to urge the EAC Council of Ministers to fast track the process of finalizing the amendment of the protocol for the establishment of IUCEA 2002.
2. The Committee recommends to the Assembly to urge the Council of Ministers to intervene and resolve the long outstanding dispute over the ownership of the two IUCEA Houses located in Kololo, Uganda.
3. The Committee recommends to the Assembly to urge EAC Council of Ministers to urge Partner States member universities to adopt a common fees structure model for regional students at both public and private higher education institutions in the region.
4. The Committee recommends the harmonization of accreditation practices in the EAC region. This will increase visibility and recognition of the higher education institutions/programmes and Promote student and staff mobility.
5. The Committee recommends to the Assembly to urge the Council of Ministers to fast-track the finalization of the Alternative Sustainable Funding Mechanism to enable EAC organs and Institutions acquire sufficient funds to achieve their mission.
6. The Committee urges the Assembly that IUCEA should rebrand itself in order to have visibility. they should expand dissemination and publicity of IUCEA activities, expand the involvement of stakeholders in IUCEA activities, and establish an East African higher education forum.
7. The Committee urges the Assembly to involve institutions when carrying out sensitization programmes in the EAC Partner States.