Emerging University-Society Engagements in Africa: An Analysis of Strategic Plans

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Abstract

Due mainly to globalization, knowledge economies, liberalization, and regulation and accountability regimes, higher education institutions are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their relevance and significance to society. European and North American universities have rearticulated their profiles and adopted entrepreneurial and engaged mandates. The extent to which and how African universities are strategically repositioning themselves in that respect remains obscure. Using relevant theoretical frameworks, this study explores emerging modalities of university-society engagements and linkages in Africa through a critical analysis of the current strategic plans of 30 universities from 14 countries. Qualitative and quantitative analyses of the strategic plans reveal that universities have explicitly identified strategies for the production and transfer of knowledge; for creating networks and partnerships; and for engaging varied stakeholders in decision making at various levels. Implications for further research are identified.

Keywords: Africa, engagement, higher education, society, strategic plans, universities

Introduction

Due mainly to globalization, democratization, and liberalization (Brennan, King, & Lebeau 2004, P. 19), higher education institutions (HEIs) are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their relevance and significance to society (Addie, 2018; Altbach, 2008; Hannon, 2018; Massen, 2014; Pugh et al., 2018; Reichert, 2019). The socio-cultural and economic transformative potential of universities (Pinheiro, Wangenge-Ouma, Balbachevsky, & Cai, 2015; Brennan et al., 2004) seems more vividly acknowledged than ever before. Universities are thus expected to significantly and directly contribute to innovation, economic growth and development, democratization, social cohesion, and sustainability.

These expectations seem to mainly trigger the generation of "strategic responses" (Pinheiro et al. 2015, p. 1) by HEIs. To promote societal engagement, universities seem to identify two nonexclusive strategies. One, a "third mission has emerged for higher education – next to its two traditional missions of education and research – which reflects an expected close engagement, in the first place economic, of higher education with society" (Massen 2014, p. 33). This is generally called university community service which comes in the form of paid or non-paid consulting. The other, a what looks more recent budding strategy, is to embed community service into the academic core- education and research. University teaching and research are presumably framed within and directly contribute to serving real societal needs. These manifest in the form of teaching and research activities with clear and achievable goals of transforming communities (Ofoyuru, 2018).

In both cases, such traditional functions of universities as ideology expression, elite selection and socialization, knowledge generation, and training of skilled labor force (Castells, 2001) and particularly the mechanisms used seem to require further reconceptualizations. The nature of the "social contract" (Massen, 2014, p. 33) between HEIs and society seems qualitatively changing. As part of the strategy for the realization of these emerging engagement modalities and learning from corporate management, HEIs embark on strategic planning.

University strategic plans embody university aspirations and intentions to become more relevant and significant to society. However, due partly to varied socio-cultural, economic, and governance realities, the modalities and extents of emerging engagements vary across regions, countries and institutions. Analyses of the strategic plans of 115 European and North American universities, for example, indicated that universities "have responded to these changing circumstances by adopting a variety of entrepreneurial and engaged mandates that have rearticulated both their institutional and territorial profiles" (Addie, 2018, p. 2). Emerging university-society engagements are explicitly linked to teaching, learning, research, and community service. Universities also forge strategic partnerships and networks with stakeholders at the city, community, state, national, regional, and global levels.

Partly as a response to this societal development and partly due to institutions' natural gait to serve their society, African universities are poised to substantially reconceptualize their missions- education, research and community service (Frempong, Mohamedbhai, & Addy, 2014) through engaging in strategic planning. Universities worldwide use strategic planning to "direct long-term institutional priorities, establish internal benchmarking indicators, and restructure broad ways of

operating in response to changing external drivers, relations, and societal expectations" (Addie, 2018, p. 6 -7). Through strategic plans, universities reposition themselves to engage in meeting societal needs more directly.

Still, our understanding of the modalities and extents of university engagements across African regions as enshrined in their strategic plans is unclear. First, strategic planning as a methodology started in education after the mid-1980s (UNESCO, 2010) and reached Africa only lately. Strategic planning analysis as a field of study in higher education (HE) globally has gained momentum recently. Second, some existing studies on strategic planning analysis seem to focus on the examination of university mission and vision statements only. Third, studies seem to report case analyses of the strategic plans of individual universities. There exists a paucity of analysis of university strategic plans across African regions as well as empirical studies that explore actual practice.

Expectations of the African states from universities evolved in the aftermath of colonialization (Teferra, 2014). As such, African nations are embracing the discourse of the knowledge economy and seeking to revitalize their HE systems (Molla & Cuthbert, 2016), with university functions presumed to be progressing from teaching to research, and eventually to community service. Empirical studies on this topic are yet to gain momentum but some studies (Cloete & Maaseen, 2015; Mugabi, 2015; Ofoyuru, 2018; Ogunsanya, Olajumoke, & Govender, 2019, Schalkwyk, 2015) seem to reveal somewhat marginal and fragile situation of university-society engagements in Africa budding in all the three core functions of the university: teaching, research and direct service. Moreover, much of the emphasis still seems to be on teaching and learning (Cloete & Maassen, 2015; Mugabi, 2014; Ogunsanya, Olajumoke, & Govender, 2019). However, these engagement studies are either case studies (Mugabi, 2015; Ofoyuru 2018) or comparative studies of eight universities from Southern and Eastern Africa only (Cloete & Maaseen, 2015; Schalkwyk, 2015). This limits our understanding of the modalities and extents of university-society engagements across African regions.

This study aspires to extend our understanding of emerging university-society engagement modalities by analyzing the strategic plans of 30 universities from Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Western Africa. As strategic plans identify organizational goals, priorities and implementation mechanisms based on internal and external multi-stakeholder deliberations- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analyses (Addie, 2018; Allison & Kaye, 2011; Chang, 2006; Hinton, 2012; Pirtea, Nicolescu, & Botoc, 2009), methodically analyzing strategic plans

can reveal the nature of emerging university-society engagements in selected universities. The study could deepen our understanding of the emerging strategic positioning of universities within the context of the knowledge society. It will also identify theoretical and methodological issues and challenges in studying this fast-emerging development in the African HE landscape.

Research Questions and Definitions

To render a holistic understanding of emerging university-society engagement modalities, this study makes some assumptions. First, examining the specific factors or conditions that trigger the development of university strategic plans as opposed to traditional plans can explain why, how and to what extent academic cultures and/or entrepreneurial, business motives drive contemporary university functioning. Second, studying university vision deepens our understanding of the immediate future organization and functioning of universities amidst changing circumstances. Third, examining how and to what extent the core functions of universities (teaching, research, and service) are reconceived in the strategic plans can reveal institutional positioning and the level of readiness to meaningfully implement their strategic plans. Finally, an exploration of the strategic pillars facilitates our understanding of university priority areas amidst meagre resources and global competitions. Strategic plan analysis can reveal how and to what extent universities are poised to engage with society.

The overarching research question that guides this study is thus: How does strategic planning analysis deepen our understanding of potential modalities of emerging university-society engagements in Africa? The following specific questions are articulated based on the general question and the analytical frameworks outlined below.

1.   What triggers the development of university strategic plans?

2.   What visions and strategic pillars are universities pursuing?

3.   How and to what extent are universities repositioning themselves (with regard to teaching, research, and service) in relation to emerging societal needs and challenges?

For clarity, some terminologies need operational definitions. *Engagement* lacks a universal definition but such terms as "service learning, outreach, community engagement, scholarly engagement, university-industry linkages, third mission, and popularization of science" generally appear synonyms (Schalkwyk, 2015, p. 205). As per the foregoing discussions, engagement in this study refers to university strategic or methodic positionings and activities primed to respond and contribute to addressing real societal needs and challenges more directly and sustainably. The academic core-education and research- is conceived and organized in such a way that real community or societal needs and challenges are reflected and represented. Engagements could target the needs and challenges of

various locales which fall under university spheres of influence- cities and towns, communities, districts, states, provinces, countries, regions and the world society at large. The focus of this study is on emerging engagements in the sense that recent university-society interplays articulated within the contexts of globalization, internationalization, discourses of knowledge economies and societies, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the concern of the study. The post-2015 university strategic plans are considered for analysis in this study as they reflect emerging university-society engagements. Contextual analysis involving sociocultural, economic, and governance aspects of society facilitates meaning making and understanding (Bekele, 2018). A brief account of African HE is thus provided below.

Context of Higher Education in Africa

It is noteworthy to mention that HE in Africa is not homogeneous. It is polarised along Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone colonial lines. The Anglophone higher education zones are tailored to the British system while the Francophone and Lusophone zones are tailored respectively to the French and Portuguese systems. Due to its geopolitical positioning, North Africa is additionally influenced both by Europe and the Arab world. These zones have distinct systems of university education (Assie-Lumumba, 2006). Africa is also divided into Northern, Western, Central, Eastern and Southern geopolitical regions (Soderbaum & Brolin, 2016) which seek to address issues of common concerns including education. They also serve as HE areas of some sort, pursuing somewhat common HE agenda and guiding principles, and having common indicators linked to the academic core (Oanda & Matiangi, 2018). The apparent need for universities to strategically engage with society remains compelling across those variegated zones.

Although differences at regional, national and institutional levels affect HE provision, salient common characteristics are also noticeable. Colonial legacy, harsh economic realities, poverty, HIV Aids, education access, quality and equity are generic issues that cut across the continent (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). The following accounts could thus generally illustrate the evolving positionings of African HE.

Whereas some semblance of HE existed in Africa well before colonialism (Teferra & Altbach, 2004), the university system we know in its current form is directly a colonial creation (Mohamedbhai, 2014). This colonial establishment did not initially plan for Africa to achieve mass enlightenment and attend to societal needs in a deliberate and direct way, hence the strategic development of university education was far-fetched (Cloete & Maassen, 2015).

Universities in post-colonial Africa continued to trade a narrow path of training human resource for Africanizing the civil service (Mugabi, 2014). As such, they were considered as ivory towers, which in

Etzkowitz's (2014) usage means that universities operate as secluded institutions which mind their own businesses without mutual and genuine interest in applying their knowledge to solve societal problems. They were neither engaged nor entrepreneurial in nature.

However, as expectations of the African states and society from universities evolved over time (Teferra, 2014), functions of universities presumed to progress from teaching, research, and service to society. The latter is what Clark (2004) and Etzkowitz (2014) refer to as entrepreneurialism. Universities were confronted with daunting expectations in respect to proportionately dispensing the three missions. Such demand was made by the independent African states spearheaded by their umbrella organization, the Organisation of African Unity, now the African Union.

The first Conference of Ministers of Education of the Independent African States held in 1976 resolved that higher education would be used to promote African development at individual, local, regional and national levels (Banya & Elu, 2001). These were expounded as promotion of culture, being dedicated to Africa and its people, correcting misconceptions about Africa through research, promoting science and technology, and training human resource for the pressing post-colonial needs of nation building. Universities seem to be slack in meeting the expectations though (Cloete & Maassen, 2015; Ogunsanya & Govender, 2019) due to formidable institutional and contextual predicaments.

It is noteworthy to mention further that cross-cutting institutional issues such as underfunding, increasing enrolments, and poor quality and relevance exist. Funding deficits are compelling, with per capita funding being way below the ideal (Gyimah-Brempong & Ondiege, 2011; World Bank, 2019). These press hard against the econometric gains made in terms of enrolment. Libraries, laboratories, and classrooms have neither been expanded nor improved to keep pace with enrolments (Shabani, 2013). On the other hand, many academic programs have been launched with view to raise incomes, but attempts to increase tuition tends to be met with stiff resistance from students (World Bank, 2019). Underfunding has therefore partly put a toll on quality of academic programs, teaching, and research. This has triggered concerns about relevance of university education to society.

There is however a dearth of studies that explore the quality and extent of emerging university-society engagements, making our understanding inadequate and incomplete. Studies (Cloete & Maaseen, 2015; Ogunsanya, Olajumoke, & Govender, 2019) focusing on country-level comparisons and involving a few universities and their research engagement seem to reveal somewhat a fragile situation of university-society engagements; much focus seems to be made on teaching and learning. Institutional case studies (Mugabi, 2015; Ofoyuru, 2018) also reveal fragile/nascent university-societal engagements. To extend our understanding, this study explores how and to what extent the academic core and

university third mission reveal emerging engagements through an analysis of the post-2015 strategic plans of 30 universities from four African geopolitical regions. To meaningfully explain emerging engagement modalities, this study considers the analytical frameworks explained below.

<div align="center">**Analytical Frameworks**</div>

Analytical frameworks that delineate recent transformations in HE globally, and modalities of emerging university-society engagements are needed for conceptual scaffolding. These respectively provide macro-level (national, regional, and global) and meso-level (institutional) explanations. The frameworks inform the articulation of the study questions and guide the organization and discussions of findings.

A plethora of conditions affects the operations of HEIs globally. Disciplinary, institutional, national, and (academic) professional cultures (Clark, 1983) determine much of the 'equation'. However, globalization and internationalization seem to trigger new modalities of university-society engagements. The Triple Helix model of university-industry-government relations (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000); and the Quintuple Helix which adds media-based public and civil society, and natural environments of society" to the Triple Helix (Carayannis & Campbell, 2012, p. 20) presumably better explain emerging engagements. Universities are thus expected to meaningfully widen their partnerships and spheres of influence to society.

The approaches and intentions of emerging university-society engagements appear varied and prolific. The entrepreneurial university model (Audretsch, 2014; Etzkowitz, 2013; Clark, 2004; Hannon, 2013; Pugh et al., 2018); Mode 2 thinking explaining the changing nature of scientific research to improve its social relevance and significance (Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2003; 2006); Mode 3 thinking explaining the nature of emerging university-society engagements regarding socio-economic development, democratization, and public accountability (Barnnet, 2004; Carayannis & Campbell, 2006; Rhoades & Slaughter, 2006); and academic capitalism explaining the economic motives of universities behind societal engagements (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2009) all elucidate on the economic interests of universities. As rational and autonomous actors having their own established cultures and norms, universities also aspire to meet the needs of society.

For the meso level analysis, the Addie (2018) methodological model is chosen to provide further conceptual scaffolding for its 1) comprehensiveness in its inclusion of multifaceted university functions, 2) solid foundation on frameworks that emerged from empirical investigation of contemporary developments in HE and society, and 3) simplicity and practicality to analyze university strategic plans.

The defining characteristics of emerging university-society engagements are captured in such three core categories as Mediation, Centrality, and Difference and nine indicators (see Table 1). Addie

used this methodology to study the strategic plans of 115 universities in London and New York and found it appropriate in revealing emerging university-society engagement modalities. This study used a slightly adapted version of the model as outlined below.

Mediation mainly reflects knowledge production and dissemination mechanisms. Such Mediation indicators as Internal coordination, Knowledge exchange, and External relations "highlight strategic attention being given to the internal coordination of academic activities, the prioritization of knowledge mobilization, and the external relations being targeted through such processes" (Addie, 2018, p. 9).

Centrality includes such indicators as Institutional networks, Campus development, Community, and Urban orientation. Centrality refers to techniques of "spatialization" universities may use to "involve inhabitants and inform decision makers across their social spaces" (Ibid, p. 10).

Table 1

University-Society Engagement Indicators

Engagement indicators	Guiding questions
Internal coordination	Are key societal challenges being used to galvanize university activities?
	Are research centres being developed and prioritized?
	Is interdisciplinary education and research a key strategic principle?
Knowledge exchange	Are mechanisms being established to promote and facilitate knowledge exchange?
	Are universities seeking to build capacities beyond basic training and education?
External relations	Are specific connections with public agencies, city plans, or development agendas being prioritized?
Institutional networks	Are universities looking to utilize branch or multicampus facilities to shape outreach and program delivery?
	Are regional and international networks identified?
Campus development	Are there plans to introduce open and flexible spaces on campus?
Community	Are stakeholders identified?
	Does the university prioritize community relations and processes of place-making?
Urban orientation	Is the university's position in its city or region key to its institutional mission?
	How are local, national, and global visions presented and balanced?
Opening access	Is there evidence of established mechanisms to target nontraditional students?
	Are issues surrounding widening participation addressed?
	Are there clear approaches to rendering the university more porous?

New pedagogies and technologies	Are new technologies to promote teaching and research being explored?
	Are there proposals to develop open access forums for academic work?
	Are new learning outcomes deemed relevant to society articulated?

Source: Addie, 2018, pp. 9-12.

Difference indicators (Opening access, and New pedagogies and technologies) "consider whether universities are actively engaging varied urban stakeholders (as students, collaborators, audiences). This includes enhancing participation for diverse communities and seeking to invest in technologies that facilitate broadened mandates" (Addie, 2018, p. 11).

Overall, the theoretical frameworks explained above are developed within Western contexts. Their relevance and significance to Southern realities such as those in Africa is less known. The use of these conceptions in this study is however justified in several ways. First, scientific theories generally presumably have external validity (generalizability) as they are developed based on evidence collected from varied settings. Second, universities are universal institutions having shared understandings about science, society, humanity, and development. That the cultures of the disciplines are universal consolidates this argument. Third, discourses linked to globalization, internationalization, knowledge society and economy, and technological advances contribute to the further development of universal values and policies. There are indications that African nations and universities embrace the discourses of the knowledge economy and seek to revitalize their HE systems vis-à-vis community needs and challenges (Frempong, Mohamedbhai, & Addy, 2014; Molla & Cuthbert, 2016). Fourth, strategic planning in universities is one instance of the international transfer of policy ideas from the West to Africa. The analytical frameworks thus inform the articulation of the study questions and the methods and techniques used for analyzing the 30 strategic plans.

Methods

The following criteria are used for the selection of universities from four African regions. First, to include as many universities as possible from each region, an international HE database and search engine, uniRank, is considered. Unlike other ranking systems, uniRank offers a ranking of 200 African universities for the year 2019. Second, to ensure regional representation, a maximum of five universities per country are included. Third, for practical reasons only, universities having their strategic plans in English are included. Notwithstanding the exclusion of universities particularly from Francophone, Lusophone, and Arabic speaking countries, those included in this study could enable a modest analysis of emerging change dynamics in HE in Africa, as English is still the lingua franca of globalization and internationalization. However, the study does not intend to generalize its findings beyond the studied

universities. Fourth, the institutional strategic plans of universities are considered, excluding strategic plans of colleges, faculties, schools, departments, and centers. Fifth, universities having complete strategic plans are included; universities with vision and mission statements only are excluded. Sixth, actual search for the strategic plans of universities as per uniRank 2019 ranking is conducted. Based on the ranks, the official websites of universities are visited to locate their strategic plans.

However, the strategic plans of many top-ranking universities were inaccessible during the search period. Emails requesting for copies of their strategic plans were sent to over a dozen universities out of which only two responded. Besides, whereas several universities apparently posted their strategic plans on their websites, the documents could not be retrieved at the time of search because of technical challenges with the websites. Overall, the complete strategic plans of 30 universities from 14 countries were considered for analysis.

As strategic plans are grounded on institutional visions and embody goals, strategic pillars, engagement modalities, and scaffolding discourses, a primarily qualitative analysis of the current strategic plans of universities is appropriate. Qualitative policy analysis (Cardno, 2018; Wagenaar, 2007; Walker, Rahman, & Cave, 2001) complemented by quantitative content analysis of strategic plans is found relevant for this study.

The three categories and the nine indicators of emerging university-society engagement modalities are used as organizing logics for analyzing the strategic plans. The following scoring rubrics (Addie, 2018, p. 9 - 12) are used to analyze the strategic plans. The questions under each category or indicator are adapted for simplicity and clarity, and guided actual analysis (see Table 1). As HE relevance and significance to society is powerfully justified partly in terms of student competencies and skills, a new question dealing with learning outcomes (transferable skills) is included under the New pedagogies and technologies indicator.

The 0 - 4 continuum Addie (2018) developed presumably found effective in analyzing the strategic plans of 115 UK and US universities. It is also considered sufficient to explore emerging African university engagement modalities with society. Analysis of the strategic plans is guided by the following formula (Addie, 2018, p. 12).

4- Explicit, Dedicated Engagement. The indicator is explicitly identified as a key strategic planning principle and is central to the university's plan, mission, and vision. Direct reference is made to specific mechanisms, processes, or objectives targeting development to this end.

3- Explicit, Identified Priority. The indicator is a highly visible and explicitly identified area for strategic prioritization, but without evidence of specific mechanisms to develop an institutional agenda.

2- Implicit, Embedded Importance. The indicator is acknowledged as an important consideration, but without specific connections drawn to institutional programs or planning.

Implicit, Acknowledgment. The indicator is mentioned passively through a general appeal to its relevance, but it is not emphasized.

No Evidence. The indicator is not referenced at all.

Varied techniques are used to analyze and synthesize the data. To reveal findings linked to the rationales, visions, and strategic pillars, qualitative thematic analysis is used. Themes which describe commonalities and differences across the strategic plans with regard to these elements are created. Where appropriate, counts and percentages are complementarily used. To exemplify themes, excerpts directly taken from the strategic plans are provided.

To identify patterns or dominating categories and indicators across African regions and universities regarding the modalities of engagements, quantitative content analysis is conducted. The number of universities and their corresponding percentages, and average scores for the categories and indicators at the regional and institutional levels are calculated. The country level of analysis is not considered as seven countries out of the 14 are represented only by one university each.

Both the qualitative and quantitative analyses focus on identifying the pattern and trend in emerging university-society engagement modalities. The major findings are discussed in comparison with the analytical frameworks and other literature. Implications of the findings to future strategic planning are highlighted. Issues and tensions having theoretical and methodological implications for further research are also identified. Due to regional, national, and institutional diversity, the findings and conclusions of this study are valid for the studied universities only.

<div align="center">**Findings**</div>

This section consecutively highlights the rationales behind the development of university strategic plans, university visions, reconceptualizations of university core functions, and strategic pillars. For contextualization, some demographic information about the regions, countries, and universities included in the study is provided first.

Demographic Information

Using the search criteria, 30 universities are selected from 14 countries from Southern Africa (South Africa, eSwatini, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe), Northern Africa (Egypt and Libya), Eastern Africa (Ethiopia, Mauritius, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania), and Western Africa (Ghana and Nigeria), see Table 2 below. Due to 1) the limited sample size compared to the number of African universities, and 2) the diverse nature of African HE, the conclusions of the study concern the studied universities only.

The data indicate that 1) the vast majority of the universities are public institutions and hence private-public university comparisons are insignificant in this study, 2) the strategic plans of 50 % of the universities cover six years whereas 33% of them have plans covering five years, 3) the strategic plan of the American University in Cairo has the shortest time span (four years) whereas the University of Pretoria strategic plan covers the longest period (15 years) followed by the University of Johannesburg (13 years), the University of Ghana (11 years), and the University of Rwanda (eight years), see Table 2. Substantial differences also exist among universities regarding the rationales they provide in support of the development of their strategic plans.

Table 2

Sampled Countries, Universities and Strategic Plan Time Periods

Country	University and strategic plan time period
Egypt	Ain Shams University (2018-2023), American University in Cairo (2019-2022), Benha University (2017-2022), British University in Cairo (2017-2022)
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa University (2015-2020), Bahir Dar University ((2015-2019), and Haramaya University (2015-2020)
Ghana	University of Cape Coast (2018 - 2022), University of Education (2014-2018), University of Ghana (2014-2024)
Libya	University of Tripoli (2013 - 2018)
Mauritius	University of Mauritius (2015-2020)
Namibia	Namibia University of Science and Technology (2014-2018).
Nigeria	University of Jos (2015-2019), Kwara State University (2014-2019), University of Nigeria (2013-2018), University of Uyo (2015-2020), Ilorin University (2019-2023)
Rwanda	University of Rwanda (2018-2025)
South Africa	University of Cape Town (2016-2020), University of Pretoria (2011-2025), University of Wits (2017-2022), University of Johannesburg (2013-2025), University of Stellenbosch (2019–2024)
Sudan	National University of Khartoum (2017-2022)
eSwatini	University of Eswatini (2016-2021)
Tanzania	Sokoine University of Agriculture (2016 – 2021)
Zambia	University of Zambia (2018-2022)
Zimbabwe	Midlands State University (2019-2023), University of Zimbabwe (2016-2020)

Rationales, Visions, and Strategic Pillars

The rationales behind the development of the strategic plans are provided as preludes, introductions or as prefaces to the plans. The following non-exclusive categories of rationales are identified. The categories are made based on explicit statements provided in the strategic plans- the percentages do not implicate the overall significance of a category as additional rationales are implicitly provided in the plans.

Positioning

Twenty-two universities (73%) claim that their strategic plans are developed to improve their relevance and significance to emerging national, regional, and international needs and challenges. The overarching rationale is to improve HE quality and relevance through embracing entrepreneurial spirits. Terms the strategic plans used to articulate this rationale include customer, corporate, stakeholders, business, income generation, and service provision. Strategic plans are also needed to presumably better introduce the university to the various stakeholders, thereby to improve institutional transparency and accountability. A dozen universities also claim that strategic plans are needed to identify and set institutional goals and implementation strategies. Overall, universities aspire to position themselves qualitatively differently in response to or to contribute to emerging societal needs.

Excerpts directly taken from the strategic plans exemplify this rationale. Strategic plans are developed to: address the new realities emerging from the needs of self-reliance (Sokoine University of Agriculture, 2016, p. ii), closely align to industry and the needs of society and sustainability of economic, institutional, natural, and social environments (Namibia University of Science and Technology, n.d., p. 55), capture the cornerstones of a common vision and understanding of its role and identity within the context of national, regional, and global demands (University of Pretoria, 2011, p. 2), and quickly and adequately align itself with new environmental realities (Midlands State University Zimbabwe, n.d., 5).

Pillar Identification

To nine universities, strategic plans identify strategic pillars for focus amid limited financial, material, human, and technologic resources, and global competitions. Such pillars as innovative pedagogies, applied research, business-oriented consulting, community engagement, and internationalization are given prime importance. However, the analysis of all the 30 strategic plans reveals such strategic pillars as quality of education (100%), impactful research (93%), innovation and technology (87%), partnerships (70%), governance (50%), campus development (43%), internationalization (43%), and income generation (40%).

Excerpts directly taken from the strategic plans exemplify this rationale. Strategic plans are needed to: map out its strategic directions, intended outcomes, performance measures, and communication strategies for dynamic and sustainable improvements (Addis Ababa University 2015, 3), set out the vision and the key strategic directions and corresponding actions and indicators (University of Mauritius, n.d., p. 1), and properly re-engineer its prospects vis-à-vis its programmes, as well as the needs of its internal and larger communities (University of Uyo, 2015, p. 4).

Competitiveness

To seven universities, strategic plans are developed to improve their competitiveness at national, regional, and international levels. Expressions the strategic plans used to articulate this aspiration include: to become one of the best performing universities, one of the leading, to be a leader, and to be the leading. University vision statements clearly embody this concept. However, a closer analysis of the vision statements of the 30 universities reveals the following exclusive categories of ambitions. The classification is based on how the vision statements articulate university aspirations. The classification of rationales is thus based on explicit statements made in the strategic plans.

Continental Aspirations

Universities (47%) envision to become among the best performing in Africa. Terms the strategic plans used to highlight this aspiration include highly ranked African university, a distinguished African university, a preeminent African university, a premier African university, a leading African university, and Africa's university of choice. The ambition is to: be among the top ten pre-eminent graduate and research universities in Africa by 2025 (Addis Ababa University, 2015, p. 9), be an inclusive, engaged and research-intensive African university (University of Cape Town, n.d., p. 6), and become the university of choice in Africa (University of Eswatini, n.d., p.10).

Global Aspirations

Others (37%) aspire to become one of the leading universities globally. Such terms as world class, globally competitive, globally ranked, globally rated, globally leading, worldwide leader, and a university with worldwide acclaim, are used. The aspiration here is to: be a world-class university internationally recognized for its leadership and excellence in teaching, research, creative expressions, and service (American University in Cairo, n.d., p. 2), be a leading research intensive university firmly embedded in the top 100 world universities by 2022 (University of Wits, n.d., p. 5), and be a leading, innovative, entrepreneurial and technologically-driven world class university (Midlands State University, n.d., p. 5).

National Aspirations

To the rest of the universities (17%), the aspiration is to become among the best performing universities in their own countries. But, theoretically, a university with continental and/or global aspirations can also have national aspirations. Terms used include to be a leading university producing enterprising graduates; a leading university in the provision of quality education; a premier university of science and technology; an eminent university driven by pursuit of knowledge, innovation, and social responsiveness; and to be foremost in expanding the frontiers of knowledge. Universities aspire to: be a leading university in the provision of quality knowledge and skills in agriculture and applied sciences (Sokoine University of Agriculture, 2106, p. iv), and become a premier university of science and technology preparing leaders for the knowledge economy (Namibia University of Science and Technology, n.d., p. 29).

Overall, the findings indicate similarities and differences among African universities regarding the rationales behind the articulation of strategic plans, university visions, and strategic pillars. The pattern is that universities aspire to position themselves in qualitatively different ways compared to what their histories tend to implicate. All plan to directly and significantly attend and contribute to emerging realities in their societies and beyond. The modalities and extents of emerging university positionings are but as varied as they are prolific.

Modalities of Emerging University-Society Engagements

As explained in the methods section, the strategic plans of 30 universities are coded and analysed using the three categories and nine indicators such as Mediation (International coordination, Knowledge exchange, External relations), Centrality (Institutional networks, Campus development, Community, Urban orientation), and Difference (Opening access, and New pedagogies and technologies), and 19 items that define modalities of emerging engagements (see Table 1).

As some indicators appear similar, a brief distinction is useful to understand the findings. External Relations refers to specific university connections with public agencies, city plans, or development agendas as linked to the coordination of academic activities and the prioritization of knowledge mobilization. Institutional Networks refers to university linkages with regional and international networks linked to branch or multicampus facilities to shape outreach and program delivery whereas Community refers to strategies universities consider to involve stakeholders and their plans to enhance community relations and processes of place-making.

As the goal of the analysis is to map out emerging university-society engagements by identifying the pattern, tendency and or trends in the data sets, category and indicator average scores are calculated without resorting to statistical significance testing. It is not to the best interest of this study to explain the nature or amount of differences between African regions and universities regarding engagement categories and indicators. The analysis focuses on examining how and to what extent the 30 universities aspire to forge new engagements with their societies.

To render clear logic, the analysis followed a deductive approach, consecutively highlighting engagement modalities at the continental, regional, and institutional levels. The national level of analysis is found not relevant in this study as seven of the 14 countries are represented only with a single university each.

Table 3 indicates the modalities and extents of emerging university engagements at the continental level. The average engagement score for the 30 universities (3.56) lies midway between Explicit, identified priority and Explicit, dedicated engagement. Universities seem to have at least explicitly identified strategies of engagement with their societies. Mediation appears the most prominent dimension of engagement (3.63) followed by Centrality (3.54) and Difference (3.50). The most and least prioritized engagement modalities appear respectively Knowledge exchange (3.83), and Urban orientation (3.33) and Opening access (3.36). These indicators belong respectively to Mediation, Centrality, and Difference. Overall, the universities seem to identify explicit modes and strategies of engagements with their society.

Table 3

Continental Average Scores by Category

Category	Score
Internal Coordination	3.44
Knowledge Exchange	3.83
External Relations	3.63
Mediation average	**3.63**
Institutional Networks	3.66
Campus Development	3.51
Community	3.68
Urban Orientation	3.33
Centrality average	**3.54**

Opening Access	3.36
New Technologies	3.64
Difference average	**3.50**
Grand Average	**3.56**

At the sub-indicator level, Societal challenges justifying mission (3.96) and Capacity building beyond training (3.93)- Mediation; and New pedagogies and technologies (3.90)- Difference; and Interdisciplinarity (2.83)- Mediation, and City university position (2.93)- Centrality- are respectively the most and least prominent engagement modalities, see Table 4. The former indicates that universities have nearly Explicit, dedicated strategies for engagement whereas the latter indicates nearly Explicit, identified priorities lacking dedicated engagement strategies. Universities appear to have Explicit, identified strategies for the rest of the sub-indicators. To have a complete understanding of the extent and modality of engagements across locales, a regional analysis is conducted.

Table 5 reveals that universities in Eastern (3.68) and Western (3.67) Africa appear the most attuned to direct societal development agendas compared to universities in Southern (3.35) and Northern (3.33) Africa. Western Africa seems to lead in Mediation (3.83) and Centrality (3.74) while Eastern Africa seems to lead in Difference (3.66). On the other hand, the least dedicated engagement modalities for Southern Africa is Mediation (3.18) whereas they are Centrality (3.33), and Difference (3.05) for Northern Africa.

Table 4

Continental Average Scores by Indicator

Indicators	Averages
Societal challenges justifying mission	3.96
Research centers opened	3.53
Interdisciplinarity promoted	2.83
Knowledge exchange mechanisms identified	3.73
Capacity building beyond training	3.93
Specific connections prioritized	3.63
Outreach program delivery branch multicampus	3.53
Regional and international organizations as partners	3.80
Open flexible campus spaces	3.50

Stakeholders or customers identified	3.63
Community relations as priority	3.73
City university position as key to mission	2.93
Balance of local, national, and global visions	3.73
Non-traditional students targeted	3.16
Widening participation	3.43
University made more porous	3.50
New technologies for teaching, research	3.90
Open access forums for academic work	3.60
New learning outcomes	3.43
Grand average	**3.55**

More specifically, the two most and least prominent modalities of engagement for Eastern Africa seem respectively Knowledge exchange (3.92) and Community (3.85), and Urban orientation (3.49) and Internal coordination (3.56). Western Africa gives most dedicated priority to Knowledge exchange (4.00) and Campus development (4.00), making the region the most strategically articulated in Africa in those parameters. Its least prioritized engagement modalities include Urban orientation (3.43) and New pedagogies and technologies (2.74). Northern Africa's most and least prominent engagement modalities are respectively Community (4.00), External relations (3.80), Institutional networks (3.80), and New pedagogies and technologies (3.80); and Campus development (2.20) and Opening access (2.30). The most and least prominent strategies for Southern Africa are respectively Knowledge exchange (3.71) and Campus development (3.61); and Internal coordination (2.34).

Table 5

Regional Average Scores by Category

Categories	Northern	Eastern	Southern	Western
Internal Coordination	3.20	3.56	2.34	3.66
Knowledge Exchange	3.70	3.92	3.71	4.10
External Relations	3.80	3.57	3.51	3.75
Mediation average	**3.56**	**3.68**	**3.18**	**3.83**
Institutional Networks	3.80	3.78	3.51	3.68
Campus Development	2.20	3.71	3.61	4.10
Community	4.10	3.85	3.41	3.75

Urban Orientation	3.10	3.49	3.31	3.43
Centrality average	**3.33**	**3.70**	**3.46**	**3.74**
Opening Access	2.30	3.71	3.26	3.83
New Technologies	3.80	3.61	3.51	2.74
Difference average	**3.05**	**3.66**	**3.38**	**3.33**
Regional Average	**3.33**	**3.68**	**3.35**	**3.28**

Interesting commonalities and differences are also noticed when sub-indicators are considered as the units of analysis, see Table 6. Western (seven indicators) and Northern (four indicators) Africa tend to have the greatest number of Explicit, dedicated engagement indicators whereas Eastern and Southern Africa appear to have the least number of fully achieved indicators (two each). Explicit, dedicated priorities are given to: Societal challenges, Stakeholders identified, Community relations, and New pedagogies and technologies in Northern Africa; Capacity building and Stakeholders identified in Eastern Africa; Societal challenges and Capacity building in Southern Africa; and Societal challenges, Knowledge exchange, Capacity building, Open flexible campus, Community, Balance of local/regional/global visions, and New pedagogies and technologies in Western Africa. Whereas Implicit, embedded importance is given to Interdisciplinarity in Northern (2.20) and Southern Africa (2.70). Northern Africa also pays the least Implicit acknowledgment to Non-traditional students (1.60) compared to all the regions. Overall, all African regions seem to have Explicit, identified priorities for most of the indicators of engagements.

Table 6

Regional average scores, by indicator

Indicators	Northern	Eastern	Southern	Western
Societal challenges justifying mission	4.00	3.8	4.00	4.00
Research centers opened	3.40	3.85	3.20	3.75
Interdisciplinarity promoted	2.20	3.00	2.70	3.25
Knowledge exchange mechanisms identified	3.60	3.85	3.50	4.00
Capacity building beyond training	3.80	4.00	3.90	4.00
Specific connections prioritized	3.80	3.57	3.50	3.75
Outreach program delivery branch multicampus	3.80	3.85	3.20	3.50
Regional and international organizations as partners	3.80	3.71	3.80	3.87
Open flexible campus spaces	2.20	3.71	3.60	4.00

Stakeholders or customers identified	4.00	4.00	3.30	3.50
Community relations as priority	4.00	3.57	3.50	4.00
City university position as key to mission	2.20	3.57	2.90	2.87
Balance of local, national, and global visions	3.80	3.42	3.70	4.00
Non-traditional students targeted	1.60	3.42	3.30	3.75
Widening participation	2.40	3.85	3.30	3.87
University made more porous	3.00	3.85	3.20	3.87
New technologies for teaching, research	4.00	3.71	3.90	4.00
Open access forums for academic work	3.60	3.85	3.40	3.62
New learning outcomes	3.80	3.28	3.20	3.62
Grand average	**3.31**	**3.68**	**3.42**	**3.75**

The next question relates to the modalities and prominence of particular engagement categories and indicators at the institutional level. As Table 7 indicates, Explicit, dedicated engagement strategies for Knowledge exchange, Community, and External relations are identified respectively by 22, 21, and 19 universities across the regions. A little more than 50% of the universities do also have Explicit, dedicated engagement mechanisms for Institutional network, Community, and Opening access. National University of Khartoum, University of Cape Town, University of Jos, and University of Mauritius have Explicit, dedicated engagement strategies for Internal coordination whereas Addis Ababa University, University of Mauritius, University of Rwanda, National University of Khartoum, and University of Wits have also Explicit, dedicated mechanisms for Urban orientation. However, University of Tripoli, Bahir Dar University, and University of Zambia have Implicit, embedded importance respectively for Internal coordination, External relations, and Institutional network. Ain Shams University, University of Zambia, and University of Tripoli have Implicit, acknowledgment respectively for Opening access, Internal coordination, and Urban orientation. Finally, strategic plans of Ain Shams University and University of Tripoli left no clear evidence of engagement mechanisms respectively for Campus development; and Campus development and Opening access. Of all the universities, it is only the University of Pretoria and University of Stellenbosch which have not achieved the full Explicit, dedicated status in any of the nine categories. Indeed, they have attained an Explicit, identified priority in all the categories but lacking clear evidence of specific mechanisms to develop an emerging institutional positioning.

However, this study focuses only on the pattern and trend that cut across institutional, and regional boundaries. Explaining differences among institutions and regions regarding engagement modalities is beyond the scope of the study. The major findings of the study are discussed below considering the analytical frameworks and other literature.

Table 7

Institutional Average Scores by Category

University	IC	KE	ER	IN	CD	CO	UO	OA	NP
American University Cairo	3.00	3.50	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.66	4.00
Ain Shams University	3.33	4.00	4.00	3.50	0.00	4.00	3.50	1.33	3.66
Benha University	3.66	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	4.00
British University in Egypt	3.66	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00
University of Tripoli	2.33	3.00	3.00	3.50	0.00	4.00	1.50	0.00	3.33
Addis Ababa University	3.33	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	4.00	4.00
Bahir Dar University	3.33	4.00	2.00	3.50	4.00	3.50	3.00	3.00	2.33
Haramaya University	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.33	3.66
University of Mauritius	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	4.00	4.00
University of Rwanda	3.66	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
National University of Khartoum	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.66
Sokoine University of Agriculture	3.66	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.66	3.66
Namibia University of Science and Technology	3.66	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00
University of Cape Town	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.66
University of Pretoria	3.33	3.00	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.66
University of Wits	3.66	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.00	3.50	4.00	3.00	3.33
University of Johannesburg	3.66	3.50	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.66
University of Stellenbosch	3.33	3.50	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.66
University of Eswatini	3.00	3.50	3.00	3.50	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.66
University of Zambia	1.66	3.50	4.00	2.00	4.00	3.00	3.50	3.33	3.66
Midlands State University	3.66	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.66	3.33
University of Zimbabwe	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.50	3.00	4.00	4.00
University of Cape Coast	3.66	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.66	3.66

	IC	KE	ER	IN	CD	CO	UO	OA	NP
University of Education	3.66	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.66
University of Ghana	3.66	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.66
University of Jos	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.00	3.00	3.66
Kwara State University	3.6	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	3.50	3.50	4.00	3.66
University of Nigeria	3.66	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	4.00	3.66
University of Uyo	3.66	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	4.00
Ilorin University	3.33	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	4.00	3.50	4.00	4.00

Notes: IC- Internal coordination; KE- Knowledge exchange; ER- external relations; IN- Institutional networking; CD- Campus development; CO- Community; UO- Urban orientation; OA- Opening access; NP- New technologies and pedagogies.

Discussion and Conclusion

Socio-cultural, economic, and political needs and challenges of societies appear the key drivers of the development of university strategic plans. Showcasing university societal relevance and significance, strategic plans analyze at length the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union 2063 Vision, and country visions and strategies for meeting the SDGs by 2030. Universities position themselves as important actors in the realization of community, state, provincial, national, regional, and global goals for sustainable development. They are thus looking both within and beyond their geographic locales and defining society as broadly as per the dictates of globalization, internationalisation, liberalization, and democratization. That is partly why most universities (84%) envision to become among the leading institutions in Africa and globally. For focus and prioritization, such strategic pillars as quality education, impactful research, innovation and technology, partnerships, and internationalization are identified.

Varied and prolific strategies are identified for societal engagement. Universities have explicitly identified strategies for the production and transfer of scientific knowledge (Mediation); for creating networks and partnerships at community, national, and international levels (Centrality); and for engaging varied stakeholders in university governance (Difference). Overall, universities redefine their major functions (the academic core such as education and research) in line with emerging societal needs and challenges. Specifically, societal challenges seem to justify university mission (3.96), universities aspire to build their capacities beyond basic training (3.93), new technologies for teaching and research are identified (3.90), and regional and international partners are identified (3.80).

Most universities seek to improve their societal relevance and significance by becoming more entrepreneurial, in Clark's (2004) and Etzkowitz's (2014) usage of the term. Strategic plans portray universities as corporate entities, stakeholders as clients, and communities as markets. Teaching, research and service are expected to directly and substantially respond and contribute to market needs and challenges. This is partly in line with such theoretical explanations of emerging university-society engagements as Mode 2 (Nowotny et al., 2003, 2006); Mode 3 (Barnnet, 2004; Carayannis & Campbell, 2006; and Rhoades & Slaughter, 2006); and academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2009). These theoretical frameworks and university strategic plans seem to primarily elucidate on the economic interests of universities. The notion of entrepreneurial universities becoming self-determining and innovative (Clark, 1998, 2004) seems to finally take some traction among the studied African universities, but not necessarily with the sole purpose of increasing income as they also aspire to reach out to society in what Clark refers to as expanding the developmental periphery.

The findings also fit into Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (2000) Triple Helix but not the statist model where the state directly dominates the other two helices. Rather, universities seem to take strategic lead in this somewhat developing university-industry-government partnership and collaboration. The Quintuple Helix model adding "natural environments of society" and media-based public and civil society to the Triple Helix (Carayannis & Campbell, 2012, p. 20) also appear consistent with the findings. Such Mediation and Centrality indicators as external relations, stakeholder participations, institutional networks, community relations, and urban orientations are clear instances of the relevance of the Quintuple Helices to the studied African contexts. However, the influence of the state as the primary duty bearer and funder may not be underestimated, and HE operates within the purview of prevailing laws, regulations and policies.

Overall, the findings seem to mirror what Pinheiro et al. (2015) referred to as university strategic responses to societal needs. The findings seem consistent with Winberg's (2006) finding that South African universities are keen and responsive to social development issues including the environment and sustainability. Strategic plans consider university-society engagements as the core functions of universities and if successfully practiced, the marginal and fragile situation of university-society engagements reported in some studies (Cloete & Maaseen, 2015; Ogunsanya, Olajumoke, & Govender, 2019) may not hold much longer for most universities. Otherwise, evidence of marginality in university-societal engagement for some of the universities studied may

be confirmative of case study findings (Mugabi, 2015; Ofoyuru, 2018) which portend that university society engagement in two case universities may indeed be fragile with weak institutional support.

This emerging development in the studied universities could also be generally compared to the 115 London and New York university-society engagements linked to Mediation, Centrality, and Difference (Addie, 2018). The international transfer of policy ideas including strategic planning could contribute to the isomorphic nature of emerging university-society engagements in London, New York, and Africa. However, African universities cannot yet claim to have fully developed mechanisms for strengthening their societal engagements. Indeed, with the current evidence of intent to engage with society in many strategic ways and defining society broadly beyond their regular students and campus, they do not qualify as ivory towers anymore. The articulation of societal goals in their strategic plans points to the long-held aspirations of African states to use HE as an engine for socio-economic transformations (Frempong, Mohamedbhai, & Addy, 2014).

Based on the foregoing discussions, the following conclusions could be drawn. One, universities appear to primarily adopt the embedded approach to societal engagements. Instead of having a third mission dedicated for community service, the academic core (teaching, learning, and research) is conceived to embody societal goals. In instances where the third mission is maintained, community service is reduced to education consulting. Two, community or society is broadly defined to include such locales that presumably fall under university spheres of influence as cities and towns, districts, states, provinces, countries, regions/continents, and the world society at large. This exemplifies the local and universal or global nature of universities as institutions. Three, although societal goals presumed to rationalize emerging engagements, universities shoulder economic interests where education and research are branded as commercial services. This could be considered as a survival strategy amidst dwindling funding, massification of HE, and competitions at national, regional and global levels. Four, as stakeholders at several levels are recognized as important allies in conceiving and promoting emerging engagements, university governance seems to become more inclusive, participatory, democratic, and transparent. The state control of African HE that prevailed for decades seems to be seriously challenged.

The nature of emerging university engagements in Africa as embodied in strategic plans could be finally explained by Micelotta, Lounsbury, and Greenwood's (2017) model of institutional change processes. One, changes in the studied universities are more of evolutionary than revolutionary in nature, as they are triggered by "societal changes and/or the intentional introduction by change agents of modest innovations" and as changes unfold through "persuasive

embedding and consensual pragmatic collaborations" that do not interrupt institutional logics (p. 13). The development of strategic plans themselves involves multiple stakeholders and intentional analyses of macro, meso, and micro-level societal conditions that results in the consensual and collaborative rearticulation of university core functions. Two, changes appear transformational as "shared understandings, which define what is accepted and valued in the field, are overturned or significantly altered" (p. 13). Such university core functions as teaching, research, and community service as well as governance styles are substantially reconceived to presumably more directly and significantly respond and contribute to societal needs and challenges. Overall, to become more socially relevant and significant, universities reposition themselves by introducing evolutionary but transformational changes to their academic core.

This configurative study should be useful in catalyzing future research and discussions on this timely and significant topic of emerging university-society engagements in Africa. Although strategic plans as data source are found efficacious in answering the study questions and reflect universities' best strategic intentions, they do not per se reveal action, practice, and or impact. It would thus be worthwhile to collect empirical data or interrogate other documents such as annual reports which could be more potent in revealing actual implementation and impact.

This study offers a continental perspective considering 30 universities only. Similar studies involving many more universities from all the five African regions and considering their socio-cultural, economic, and governance dimensions in details are yet to follow suit. Studies on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and quality regulation and assurance within the contexts of emerging dynamics of university-societal engagements are also warranted.

Theoretical and analytical frameworks other than Modes 2 and 3 knowledge production, the entrepreneurial university and the helices models may be considered in extending the debate. Institutional phenomenological theories, critical discourse analysis, and frameworks on policy transfer could deepen our understanding of emerging university engagements with society.

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