

The Role of CERMESA in Internationalization of Higher Education and Student Mobility in Africa

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DOI: [10.36348/jaep.2021.v05i06.004](https://doi.org/10.36348/jaep.2021.v05i06.004)

| Received: 16.05.2021 | Accepted: 23.06.2021 | Published: 30.06.2021

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Abstract

This study focuses on the influence of institutional policies on student's mobility in the context of internationalization of higher education in DAAD established East and South African-German Centre of Excellence for Educational Research, Methodologies and Management – CERMESA member universities. This is a comparative study based on four case studies namely Moi University in Kenya, University of Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania, Uganda Management Institute and Nelson Mandela University in South Africa. This study has revealed how institutional policies have influenced student mobility in an organised setting making a reality anchored on internationalization of higher Education. The study was guided by the following objectives; to examine student mobility trends among CERMESA member Universities; to establish the role of CERMESA in enhancing student mobility in Africa; to assess the influence of institutional policies on student mobility in CERMESA member universities. Based on the above objectives the study answered the following questions: What is the trend of student mobility among CERMESA member universities? What is the role of CERMESA in enhancing student mobility in Africa? To what extent do university policies among CERMESA member universities accommodate student mobility? Recently cross border and inter regional movement of people has been characterized by increasing trends of student mobility in higher education. This has been actualised further through educational partnership among African states; CER-MESA is one of eleven centres of African excellence in sub-Saharan Africa, but no study has been done on the contribution of such organizations in establishing student mobility and regional integration in Africa a gap this study has filled.

Key words: Mobility, Integration, Regional, Internationalization.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This section focuses on how Selected CERMESA institutions promote mobility of students across the borders respectively. All the universities in this study namely University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, Nelson Mandela University in South Africa, Moi University in Kenya and Uganda Management Institute in Uganda seem to promote student mobility. This is a clear justification of why there are more African foreign students in CERMESA member universities. From the data obtained, it is clear that generally very little is done to promote students' mobility in Africa however University of Dar es Salaam, Nelson Mandela University, Moi University and Uganda Management Institute have put in place considerable efforts that promote student mobility.

2. CERMESA PROGRAM

Participants (n=7) and Participants (n=5) explained that CERMESA can be considered as a universal development socio economic project that brings together nations through individual universities guided with the key objectives such as to establish global academic centre of excellence in educational research methodologies and management that is a scientific society through organized academic and knowledge based scientific projects. Participants (n=7) points out that this is an international organization with clearly set mandate as outlined by Malve, Kurgat and Speck (2017), who point out that the:-

*The specific project objectives
Illustrate the academic rationale of this international cooperation: • Research Programme: Advancing and expanding excellent and innovative educational research on methodologies, instruction techniques, and*

management strategies for African contexts. • *Academic Programme: Teaching and training of future educational leaders in terms of research methodologies, innovative management solutions, and instruction techniques at master’s and doctoral levels.* • *Staff Development Programme: Advancing capacity building and staff development in academia and management of the participating universities in effective university instruction and management for (future) leaders, and sustainable institution building.*

From the above it’s clear that CERMESA plays a pivotal role in student mobility among member states. This comes in inform of special programs and services for foreign students.

3. Role of cermesa in enhancing student mobility among member universities

A comparative analysis on the role of CERMESA in enhancing students’mobility trends among selected CERMESA universities, University of Dar es Salaam, Moi University, Nelson Mandela University and Uganda Management Institute presents a unique scenario of students’mobility in Africa bearing in mind the number of foreign African students in these institutions. Participants (n=10) and (n=13) in this study pointed out that focus of CERMESA program is based on key as well as specific

international organizational objectives. This explains how the concept of internationalization of higher education, globalization of education and engagement in education are critical issues to CERMESA academic rationale and objectives, structure and collaboration and , research methodologies.

CERM-ESA is operates under two fundamental global frameworks of internationalization of higher education institutions of learning which is a focus of this study and higher education engagement which is understood as the social responsibility of higher education institutions to form partnerships with other societal actors and communities, to foster research and interdisciplinary collaboration and impact positively on the communities, the society and countries the program is based. This assertion seems to find a niche in Malve, Kurgat and Speck (2017) who have argumentatively discussed the matter and whose work has been discussed alongside the participant voices.

Participants (n=10) and (n=13) pointed out that the roles played by CERMESA in the four universities tend to promote student mobility namely; Cooperation among member universities, research, academic and teaching and staff development. It should be understood that it is this activities that promote and make this universities student mobility hubs and even influence the development of student mobility policies. As tabulated in detail below

Table-1: Research role of CERMESA

Role	Measures and Activities	Contribution to Internationalization	Contribution to Engagement
Research	4 umbrella topics and research teams	- relevant topics for all partner regions	- focus on social change and improvements
	Co-supervision of theses	- internationally comparative topics	- advancing participatory, arts- based, action research and other forms of engaged methodologies
	Participation in international conferences	cross-country / collaboration in supervision	- mutual support and ensuring best practice
	Participation in international conferences	- support for schools/ faculties of education to be internationally visible	disseminating research methodologies and results from African contexts

From table 1 Participants (n=11) (n=7) and (n=13) indicated that one of the roles of CERMESA that promote student mobility is research. Participants

pointed out that this is done through having international research schools that are alternately organised between Moi University and Nelson mandela

University. Participant (n=3) pointed out that in the year 2019 students and staff from Nelson Mandela University, University of Dar es Salaam and Uganda Management Institute attend a research school at Moi University and in 2020 Nelson Mandela University hosted all the other universities. It should be understood that through research as pointed out by participant

(n=3) the program engages the staff in a joint supervision with supervisors drawn from different member universities therefore the students stand the benefit of gaining from different contexts. Supervisors and students from different countries are facilitated to travel to member countries for supervision advisory.

Table-2: Academic and Teaching role of CERMESA

Role	Measures and Activities	Contribution to Internationalization	Contribution to Engagement
Academic and Teaching	Annual CERM-ESA schools on research methodologies for scholarship holders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •regular student and lecturer exchange •international perspectives 	- focus on ethical questions, engagement, leadership and change
	Students' visits to co-supervisors	- international experience	- exposure to other community outreach activities and methods
	New master's programme, Education Research, at Moi University	joint curriculum development, teaching and co-supervision	- innovative, contextualized research methodologies for social change

In table 2 Similarly Participants (n=11) (n=7) and (n=13) noted that this role promotes students mobility by ensuring that learners cross border to undertake studies in member universities. This movement according to participants tend to promote students mobility. Participant (n=5) indicated that CERMESA program has unique degree programs that allows member universities to admit students but take

the course at either Moi University or Nelson Mandela University and in some exceptional cases at their model university of Oldenburg in German. The mentioned graduate degree program includes Master of Education in Educational research, Doctor of philosophy in Educational research and Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology of Education. This role also emphasises on students visits to co supervisors.

Table-3: Cooperation role of CERMESA

Role	Measures and Activities	Contributions to Internationalization	Contributions to Engagement
4. Cooperation among member universities	Biannual steering committee meetings: decides made by all partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Regular cross country meetings •Visibility at a host university 	Ensures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that the programmes are relevant and beneficial to all partners
	Internationalization advisory board: experts for Africanization	- transfer of knowledge and expertise	- guidance and critical reflection is provided on African contexts & methodologies
	Building a CERMESA faculty: all alumni and participants	Forum for educationists for all partner universities	- a broad collaboration and interdisciplinary basis for the project
	Online learning platform	- online collaboration for staff and students	- sharing of resources and best practices

In reference to table 2 and 3 of this study, Participant (n=3), Participant (n=1) and Participant (n=4) pointed out that cooperation among member universities plays a critical role in the promotion of student mobility. Participants indicated that member's states are engaged in biannual steering committee meetings that are attended by members from all the other CERMESA member universities. They organize regular cross country meetings. These activities are seen to be critical in the promotion of student mobility among member states.

Participant (n=2), Participant (n=1) and Participant (n=8) pointed out that apart from the role played by CERMESA individual institutions in this study do engage in student exchange programme. It was mentioned by participant (n=9) that that one university out of the four offered credit transfer to attract students who want to study in that university, this case was not found to exist in the three other universities. Therefore this study found out that the main means of promoting students Mobility is through participating in inter university programs such as through which interaction among students may take place as well as students may be influenced to select programs in their/ participating universities. Collaborations between universities should be established in such a way that programs are intertwined to promote credit transfer and program movement opportunity to member students.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Basing on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations have been derived:-This study arguably notes that there is need for increased partnership to promote student mobility within the East and Southern African region in order to enhance and promote a sense of regional identity, shared prospects, views and values. This study points to the fact that Universities in Africa need to develop clear policy framework that guide international foreign students

5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study reveal significant contributions of CERMESA. The most important being financial and structural assistance to partner institutions and scholarship holders. Its clear from this study that CERMESA engages member universities in research programmes such as, advancing and expanding excellent and innovative educational research on methodologies, instruction techniques, and management strategies for African contexts. Academic Programme such as: Teaching and training of future educational leaders in terms of research methodologies, innovative management solutions, and instruction techniques at master's and doctoral levels. Staff Development Programme such as, advancing capacity building and staff development in academia and management of the participating universities in

effective university instruction and management for (future) leaders, and sustainable institution building.

CERMESA policies seem to be a mobility beacon among CERMESA member universities. However the findings canvas students' views on students mobility higher education and on its three individual elements, which arguably demonstrates students' comprehension of the process of student mobility in relation to the concept of internationalization of higher education. It also offers a hint of what is important for higher institutions of learning as well as students in this context, which helps the understanding of students motivations for and expectations of their study abroad as well as their 'push and pull' factors of mobility. It's clear that student mobility has a direct connection with ideas on the purpose, function and delivery of the higher education institution. These can also help the analysis of students' expectations in regards to their study abroad; moreover, in terms of the delivery, students' testimonies in regards to the knowledge and skills of graduates can by extension be considered the ideal outcomes of their cross boarder studies

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