



Developing and Retaining the Next Generation of African Academics: Excellence, Retention and Sustainability

The APHRC and CARTA Experience on Excellence

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Outline



- Why we need excellence in PG training in Africa
- The CARTA experience and contribution
- Reflections

What we mean by excellence



- A universal concept...
- Therefore the question: What “excellence” means in an African context is a misnomer
 - African researchers/academics compete in a global context
- Ways excellence in postgraduate training can be attained in Africa under prevailing circumstances

Why Excellence in PG Training?



- Globally, sub-Saharan Africa has some of the worst health and development indicators
- Excellence in research is key to understanding the drivers of, and potential solutions to the many challenges facing the region
- Yet, the continent clearly lacks centers of research excellence that can generate the evidence base to address the region's development and health problems.

Role of PG Training in Building Research Excellence



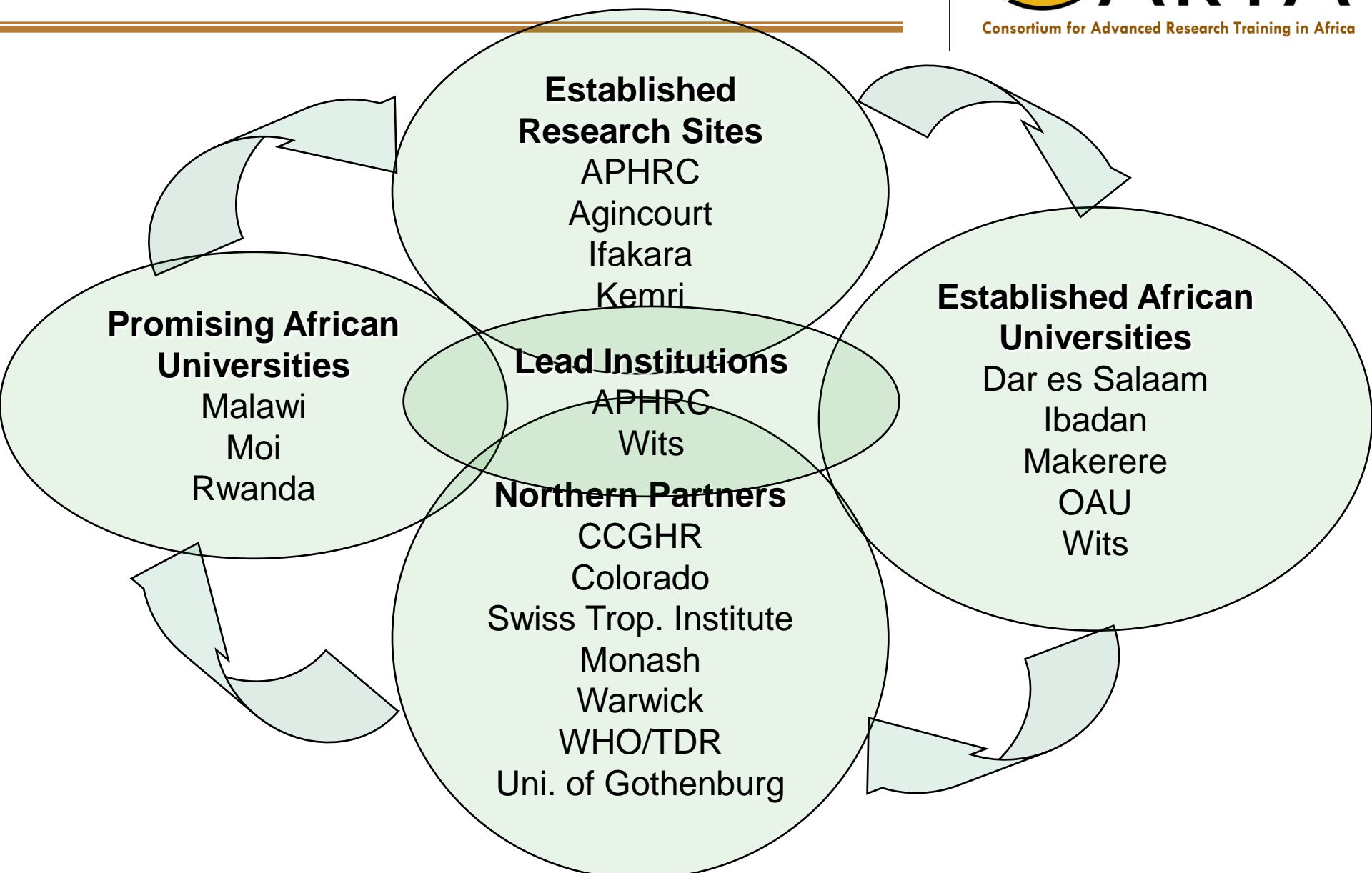
- Universities mandated to build the human resource capacity needed to drive high-quality research on the continent currently face challenges that make this difficult
- Yet, we can no longer afford overseas training
 - High and escalating costs
 - Low rates of return of overseas-trained PhDs
 - Those who return often drift away from teaching/research
- Some implications:
 - Africa employs up to 150,000 expatriate professionals at a cost of US\$4B a year to fill the human resource gap created by brain drain (African Partnership Forum (2007):
 - The continent's share of global scientific output fell from 0.5% in mid-1980s to 0.3% in the mid-1990s

Why CARTA?



- No individual African university or country has the human resource capacity to mount globally-competitive doctoral programmes
- Hence... CARTA!

CARTA Member-institutions



Key Elements of CARTA



Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa

Build and retain a vibrant African academy able to lead world- class multidisciplinary research that impacts positively on public & population health

BUILD THE NEXT GENERATION

- ☐ **Model doctoral training program**
- ☐ **Strong supervision and mentoring**
- ☐ **Joint Advanced Seminars**

DEVELOP INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

- ☐ **Strengthen research infrastructure**
- ☐ **Faculty & staff training**
- ☐ **Development of vibrant research hubs**

- **Strengthening doctoral training**
 - Registration in other universities
 - Exemption from teaching responsibilities
 - **Three supervisors** – home, training, external
 - Joint Advanced Seminar Series
 - Strong online support – Learning portal
 - Participation in international conferences
 - **Targeted sandwich/internship** at a Northern/Southern univ.
 - Research grants for student-initiated projects
 - Library support to students
 - Monthly stipend to facilitate fulltime studentship
 - Post-doctoral components – currently unfunded

1. Introduction to critical thinking and research

Build critical thinking, essential concepts and seminal literature, conceptualising research projects, research design, developing instruments, literature & data resources, research ethics

2. Data management and analysis

Mixed-methods approaches, identifying appropriate analytical models, model assumptions, common errors in data analysis, from basic analysis to complex modelling

3. Interpretation & presentation of research findings

Communicating research to policy makers, presentation skills, scientific writing, identifying appropriate journals

4. Life beyond PhD

Proposal writing, budgeting, managing research grants and partnerships, research ethics, developing course outlines and teaching materials, research and policy linkages

Inter-JAS



- Implement research skills learned in previous JAS
- Keep students actively engaged with research process, mentors and peers
- Use CARTA website to complete tasks
 - Reading materials, links to online resources
 - Interactive - communication among fellows, enhance supervision and information exchange
 - Virtual list-serve, chat room, internet library links
- Regular assignments with feedback
- Online courses
- Promote on-time graduation
- Students & supervisors present research training seminars at home institutions for other graduate students

Institutional strengthening



- Training for administrators, Librarians, Bursars
 - Post-graduate training administration
 - Research management including grant reporting
 - E-resources, Retention strategies, etc.
- Training of faculty
 - Project management
 - Mentoring of PhD supervisors; enhancing of skills
- Development of University-wide systems
 - Coherent research agendas
 - Research policy including ethical reviews, etc.
- Research Infrastructure
 - Internet connectivity
 - Graduate seminar rooms
 - Computer labs, etc
- Other support
 - Access to JAS materials
 - Relief teaching support, etc

Current Funding

- Expected program cost:
 - About US\$20M over initial 5-8 years
- Secured:
 - Wellcome Trust: \$5.8m/5yrs
 - Carnegie Corporation of NY: \$1m/18 months
 - Gates Foundation: \$200K
 - Ford Foundation: \$1m/2 years
 - British Council £105K/3years
- Potential
 - MacArthur Foundations: \$1m/3years (submitted)
 - European Union €2m/5years (submitted)
 - Other Foundations, Bilateral funders
 - African governments and philanthropists
 - Individual philanthropists

Reflections...

- Retention

- We must think outside the box!
 - Buy out time
 - Redefine parameters for salary negotiations
 - Apply limited research funds to productive faculty
- Consider flexible appointments
 - Existing expertise outside the university
 - Research appointments (non/limited teaching)
 - If accounts/bursary is a problem, outsource!

- Sustainability

- Excellence is sustainable anywhere in the world!
- The only thing that is not sustainable is mediocrity



Thank you

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