

## Does higher education in Africa support the African Union Agenda 2063?

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African universities hold the key to unlocking the bold vision of Agenda 2063, yet many remain stuck in outdated academic models, disconnected from Africa's pressing needs. These institutions must evolve into dynamic hubs of innovation, policy influence, and solution-driven research to drive real change. By embracing interdisciplinary collaboration, fostering industry partnerships, and championing homegrown knowledge, universities can become catalysts for Africa's transformation. Africa's future demands bold, proactive intellectual leadership. Universities must rise to the challenge, shaping policies, driving innovation, and turning aspirations into reality. The future of Africa starts in its classrooms.

Africa, Agenda 2063, higher education

### 1. Introduction

The African Union's Agenda 2063 envisions a [continent](#) that is prosperous, integrated, and driven by its own people. Yet, to achieve this dream, the intellectual [institutions](#) in Africa, specifically the universities, must become active enablers rather than passive observers. The stark debate is that African [universities](#), in their current form, are not adequately positioned to drive the radical transformation Africa needs. While some institutions engage in groundbreaking [research](#) aligned with Agenda 2063 focus areas, the overall impact of African universities on governance, innovation, and policy remains limited. This article reinforces the call to action for African universities to become the bedrock of Africa's long-term vision and strive to realign with Agenda 2063. The challenge is also for the African Union Commission (AUC) to enhance their advocacy of AU agenda 2063 and develop a deliberate partnership across universities in Africa for inputs in the execution of the aspirations towards the Africa We Want vision.

#### 1.1. Are universities in Africa aligned with Agenda 2063?

The disconnect between African universities and the African Union Commission's ambitious goals is evident. Many institutions operate within outdated models of [higher education](#), prioritising rigid academic structures over the pursuit of dynamic, solution-oriented knowledge. Instead of being deeply embedded in Africa's governance, technological advancement, and ecological resilience strategies, universities remain largely isolated from [policy-making](#) and developmental frameworks.

Agenda 2063 outlines Africa's aspirations that are majorly driven by its educational systems: a knowledge-based economy, self-sufficiency in key industries, and technological sovereignty. However, these objectives will remain elusive if [African universities](#) continue to operate within [colonial-era curricula](#) and bureaucratic silos. The institutions responsible for training Africa's leaders must be at the forefront of shaping policies that address governance inefficiencies, economic stagnation, and climate crises.

Universities should not merely react to Africa's challenges but proactively shape its future. This requires a shift from theoretical knowledge production to applied research and interdisciplinary collaboration that addresses Africa's pressing issues. [Universities](#) can and must serve as incubators for governance reforms, technological innovations, and indigenous knowledge systems that propel Africa forward.

A [crucial role](#) for universities is to create a critical space for informed deliberation. If African [universities unite](#) across disciplines, they can offer the AUC and pertinent regional bodies invaluable practical insights to guide governance and innovation policies. African universities must [nurture their scholarship](#) base and create an environment for research growth and development instead of waiting for the Global North universities to develop Africa's talent and scholarship base. In addition, Africa's [universities](#) could be key enablers in championing Africa's own [economic, social](#), and ecological resilience models, helping mitigate and mediate [peace initiatives](#) in areas where conflicts and instability have persisted.

Moreover, universities in Africa must step up in [regulatory](#) spaces. They should provide expertise in law and governance, examine the implementation of [policies](#), and suggest and advocate for adaptations based on empirical research. This means shifting the focus from passive critique to active participation in governance structures. The limited university-led think tanks on Africa's critical issues is a glaring omission that needs urgent redress.

#### 1.2. Bridging the Gap Between Academia and Society

One of the greatest [challenges](#) facing African academia is its perceived detachment from societal realities. Research findings often remain trapped within journal pages, [inaccessible](#) to policymakers and communities that need them most. If universities are to be meaningful contributors to Agenda 2063, they must prioritise knowledge dissemination and collaboration beyond their walls.

African universities should actively engage with the private sector, governments, and grassroots movements to ensure that

academic research translates into practical solutions. This means fostering innovation hubs, encouraging public-private partnerships, and equipping students not only with degrees but with the entrepreneurial and leadership skills necessary to drive change.

At the same time, universities should play a central role in [preserving](#) Africa's historical and cultural memory. In the face of rapid globalisation and external influence, African institutions must safeguard [indigenous knowledge](#), traditional governance systems, and local innovations that have sustained communities for centuries. Knowledge transmission must be decolonised to serve Africa's realities rather than mimic Western models that do not align with the continent's unique socio-economic and environmental landscapes.

There is an urgent need for a united African academic front. Currently, African academia is highly fragmented, mirroring the broader divisions across the continent. Universities operate in silos, with minimal cross-border collaboration. This needs to [change](#). A unified network of African universities aligned with the AU and pertinent regional bodies would create a robust intellectual foundation for Africa's transformation.

Imagine a scenario where universities across Africa co-develop curricula centred on African development goals, where students and faculty engage in transcontinental research collaborations, and where academia leads in shaping Africa's technological and governance ecosystems. Such a shift would make Agenda 2063 not just an aspiration but an achievable reality.

## 2. Universities Need to Style Up and Lead Africa's Future

The era of passive academia in Africa has reached its conclusion. African universities must cease their inertia and deeply contemplate the specific innovations that Africa genuinely requires. The current landscape is fraught with geopolitical tensions, escalating climate crises, and significant economic transformations, all of which necessitate courageous and visionary intellectual leadership. African universities bear a moral obligation and a strategic imperative to step up and assert their roles as pivotal players in shaping the governance and innovation frameworks across the continent.

The alignment of African universities with the aspirations outlined in Agenda 2063 is not merely beneficial but essential. The more these institutions integrate their missions and objectives with the continental vision, the higher the probability of actualising AU's ambitious goals. Conversely, if higher education continues to operate in a fragmented manner, it risks widening the chasm between academic pursuits and the pressing realities faced by African societies.

This moment in history is critical; African universities must confront a fundamental choice: will they remain passive observers or actively forge the blueprint for Africa's future? It is time for African universities to assert their rightful position as the intellectual vanguard driving the continent's transformation. Their engagement and leadership are not just advantageous; they are crucial for Africa's sustainable development and prosperity. The continent's future hinges on their ability to innovate, collaborate, and respond to the challenges of our time. This is not just an opportunity; it is an urgent call to action for African universities to redefine their roles and responsibilities in the broader narrative of Africa's evolution.