



A Literature Review of African Philanthropy and Higher Education in Africa

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Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy Project Team

Una Osili, PhD, *Associate Dean for Research and International Programs*

Xiaonan Kou, PhD, *Managing Director of Research*

Emmanuel Kumi, PhD, *Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Social Policy Studies, University of Ghana*

Sitashma Thapa, *Research Associate*

Dennis Kilama, *Research Assistant*

P. Ellie Wilson, *Research Assistant*

Diantha Daniels, *Executive Assistant*

J. Heidi Newman, *copyeditor*

Design by Chuck Smith Design

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1 Introduction

Across the world, higher education plays a significant role in national development. For this reason, over the years countries have placed a higher priority on higher education as part of their development agenda (Teferra, 2014). In the context of African countries, higher education was ranked as a top priority for national development; hence higher education institutions (HEIs) were generously funded by many African governments, especially during the “golden era” of African higher education (Teferra, 2013a; 2014). Importantly, African higher education has also benefited from development assistance from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies and philanthropic organizations (Jaumont, 2016). For example, many philanthropic organizations from outside Africa such as foundations have contributed immensely to the development of higher education in Africa. As Jaumont (2016, p. 2) highlights, between 2003 and 2013, about 100 philanthropic foundations invested in higher education in Africa. Specifically, philanthropic foundations that comprised the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA) invested about USD 500 million in developing African higher education between 2000 and 2010.

However, the landscape of higher education in Africa has witnessed significant changes in recent years. Specifically, there has been an emergence of new actors, including African philanthropic organizations such as private foundations and the African diaspora who supports the development of higher education due to reductions in government and external donor funding (including bilateral and multilateral agencies) (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2020; Teferra, 2014). The active involvement of African philanthropists in promoting higher education in Africa has become necessary given that in recent years, philanthropists have been called to support the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals as well as contribute to solving global development challenges such as education (Moyo, 2021; Kumi, 2019). Additionally, the increasing role of philanthropists in promoting higher education in Africa is necessary because of substantial financing gaps. The funding gaps are caused by factors such as the widespread expansion of higher education, economic challenges in many African countries, and the pressure of addressing other social problems including health, misallocation of resources and limited fiscal space by governments (Teferra & Altbach, 2003). Due to these challenges in financing higher education, African philanthropists have been called in to complement the government's efforts to mobilize resources to support

higher education. Although the financing needs of public higher education institutions are like those of private higher education institutions, many African governments do not provide public funding (i.e., subsidies and grants) for private higher education institutions because many of them have a faith-based mission (Teferra, 2013a). Their funding is thus tied to religious organizations, which can create financial sustainability challenges for private HEIs. This reality highlights the need for different funding mechanisms for higher education (both public and private), including mobilizing philanthropic resources to ensure their financial sustainability (Ngcobo et al., 2024). It also highlights the shift in perspective and practice from focusing on one source of funding to multiple sources, including the broad range of African philanthropy (e.g., diaspora, corporate social responsibility, high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs), endowments and private foundations, and alumni philanthropy), which have, until recently, been an untapped resource¹ (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2020; Teferra, 2013b; Setrana, 2019). However, our understanding of the involvement of African philanthropists in supporting higher education in Africa is limited and it is a significantly understudied phenomenon. To date, there have been no sustained empirical studies on the nuances of the role of African philanthropy in promoting higher education in Africa, the nature of the African philanthropic landscape in higher education, or the opportunities and challenges for financing higher education in Africa. These issues have not been fully studied and recognized in the existing philanthropic and higher education literature. This study, therefore, seeks to provide a thorough review of literature on these issues.

This paper is organized as follows: First, the research methodology is presented. This is followed by a discussion of the conceptualization of African philanthropy in Section 3. Then Section 4 provides an overview of higher education in Africa. Section 5 focuses on African philanthropy as a financing mechanism for higher education in Africa and highlights the philanthropic trends, practices and human actors supporting higher education. Next, in Section 6, a discussion of the challenges of African philanthropic giving for higher education is presented. Lastly, Section 7 presents a summary of the key findings and directions for future research on philanthropy and higher education in Africa.

2 Research Methodology

The approach to this review was desk-based, i.e., using secondary literature as the main data collection method. In so doing, a traditional or narrative literature review approach was adopted. This involved the review of both grey and academic literature on African philanthropy and higher education. Literature was sourced from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, discussions and working papers, conference proceedings, and policy briefs. The target databases used included Scopus, Science Direct, Taylor and Francis, Web of Science, Elsevier, Springer, Google Scholar and Google. As part of the review, news items from print and electronic media were also used. The databases were searched in all fields using the key terms: *philanthropy*, *African philanthropy*, *giving*, *alumni*, *diaspora*, *HNWIs*, *philanthropy in education* AND *higher education*, *financing higher education*, *partnerships for higher education*, *sustainability of higher education in Africa*.

The database search was not restricted to a particular chronological period. The aim was to broaden the range of literature that could be sourced for the study. However, the database was screened for inclusion using the following criteria: First, the study had to be academic, policy-oriented, or practitioner-focused. Second, it had to focus on philanthropy and higher education in Africa and contain empirical evidence rather than being theoretical or speculative. Third, it had to be published in the English language. Given

¹ According to the 2024 Africa Wealth Report, Africa had 135,200 millionaires, 342 centi-millionaires and 21 billionaires. South Africa, for instance, had 37,400 millionaires, Egypt had 15,600 and Nigeria had 8,200. For details, see <https://www.henleyglobal.com/publications/africa-wealth-report-2024>.

that there were no disciplinary boundaries to the review, it brings together insights from the literature on African philanthropy, higher education, public administration, and nonprofit studies. A narrative approach was used in synthesizing the findings from the literature. A thematic analysis was used to organize the literature, which helped in the identification of emerging themes and patterns from the literature.

3 Conceptualization and Dimensions of African Philanthropy

The idea and practice of African philanthropy is far from new. African people have a well-established tradition of generosity and have in the past as well as in the present given their time, skills, knowledge and other resources (e.g., financial) to support the vulnerable and marginalized in society. As Moyo and Ramsamy (2014) highlight, the African tradition of philanthropy has often been interpreted differently than in the West because many Africans are motivated by a deep belief in the values of humanity, dignity, and solidarity within communities. This African perspective is different and does not mirror the contemporary Western notion of philanthropy that focuses mainly on a motivation to improve the wellbeing of humankind (Kumi, 2019; Fowler, 2017).

It is important to note that discussions of African philanthropy have received relatively limited attention in the existing philanthropy literature until recently. This is partly because African philanthropy is associated with informal practices, and thus is often perceived through a prejudicial lens and as having limited potential to contribute to the development of the continent (Moyo & Ramsamy, 2014; Fowler, 2017; Mati, 2016).

While African philanthropy has often been defined in broad strokes, Fowler and Mati (2019) maintain that the conceptualization of African philanthropy comprises a much more nuanced mixture of horizontal and vertical features, which has led to a deeper understanding of African philanthropy. According to Fowler (2017), African philanthropy is defined as resources generated by Africans and applied philanthropically for the development of the continent. Similarly, Kumi (2019) argues that African philanthropy focuses on using the resources of the continent to make it self-sufficient rather than dependent on external partners.

A more accurate understanding of African philanthropy is further complicated by the fact that the term *African philanthropy* is often used interchangeably with terms such as *African gifting*, which focuses on exchanges not motivated by direct reciprocity between the giver and the receiver. Gifting is an intrinsic aspect of the culture of many African societies, where the poor often give and provide assistance to one another (Moyo & Ramsamy, 2014; Wilkinson-Maposa et al., 2005). For example, Wilkinson-Maposa et al. (2005) explore a philanthropy of community that focuses on how the poor in society support each other based on principles such as reciprocity, altruism and cooperation. To this end, the poor give their time, skills, knowledge, and material and non-material goods through, for example, cooperative societies and labor. A Western understanding of philanthropy fails to take into account how values such as reciprocity and pro-social attributes influence individuals to undertake philanthropic activities. As many African philanthropic scholars have highlighted, African philanthropy is expressed in forms such as solidarity with communities, altruism, generosity, and compassion (Fowler & Mati, 2019; Kumi, 2019).

Framework for Understanding the Dimensions of African Philanthropy

In conceptualizing the different dimensions of African philanthropy, some scholars have argued that the structure of African philanthropy is based on its spheres of philanthropic practice and the underlying motivations for the philanthropic gift (see Mati, 2016). According to Mati's (2016) description of the spheres of philanthropic practice,

African philanthropy is categorized into formal (institutional), non-formal or informal (non-institutional), and hybrid forms of philanthropy. Basically, informal philanthropy involves a direct relationship between the giver and the recipient without using the services of an intermediary. According to Wilkinson-Maposa et al. (2005), in informal philanthropy, the relationship is usually between people of similar socio-economic means.

On the other hand, formal philanthropy involves a vertical relationship between the giver and the recipient, whereby the giver has more power and resources at their disposal. Thus, as Fowler (2017) iterates, formal philanthropy is about unequal power relationships or asymmetrical relational transactions that can cause the recipient to value the gift given rather than the giver. One can argue that such a hierarchical structure can create a space for the giver to pursue their agenda, thus enabling an impure altruism.

On the other hand, hybrid philanthropy involves a blend of both formal and informal philanthropic spheres. This form of African philanthropy is demonstrated for example, through mutual aid and self-help groups. Typical examples of hybrid African philanthropy are community philanthropy, crowdfunding, and impact investments (Mati, 2016).

The African Grantmakers Network (AGN) has developed a typology for classifying African philanthropy, which comprises the following: 1) “One-to-One giving,” which involves individual generosity among family members and friends which, in turn, enhances the social bond and cooperation (e.g., payment for the education of a family member or direct acquaintance); 2) “One-to-Many giving,” a practice that involves wealthy individuals giving large gifts to support causes they care about, even though the beneficiaries are not directly related to or linked to them (e.g., funding a national entrepreneurship program); 3) “Many-to-Many giving,” which involves the mobilization of resources from a larger group of individual givers to support a shared cause that does not have a direct benefit or impact on their immediate circle (e.g., raising money for disaster response in another country); and 4) “Many-to-One giving,” a practice that involves the mobilization of multiple givers to support causes that directly benefit or impact their immediate circle (e.g., mobilizing a neighborhood to support community projects) (AGN, 2013, pp. 7-8).

4 Higher Education in Africa: An Overview

Defining higher education in Africa is a difficult task, given that there is no single understanding of the term. For example, in some African countries such as Botswana and Egypt, higher education refers to all post-high school or post-secondary education. In countries like South Africa, however, higher education refers only to university education (Pillay, 2010). Notwithstanding the definitional problem, the purpose of higher education is to develop and equip individuals to act as agents of development to address societal needs (Onuka, 2018).

Over the last two decades, the prevalence of higher education has been growing across the African continent. According to Williams and Usher (2022), between 2006 and 2018, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) experienced the highest growth rate in HEIs—of 153 percent; in countries such as Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana and Cameroon, the number of HEIs more than doubled. However, compared to other regions of the world, the availability of knowledge and data on the number of HEIs in Africa is “less

reliable, scarcer and more scattered" (Levy, 2009, p. 13). Furthermore, in SSA, comprehensive universities² remain the dominant and largest type of HEIs and have the highest concentration of enrollments (i.e., 73%) (Williams & Usher, 2022).

In recent years, the HEI landscape in SSA has been dominated by private HEIs because of their spectacular growth experienced over the past three decades. According to Williams and Usher (2022), the number of private HEIs in SSA increased by 219 percent compared to 69 percent for public HEIs between 2006 and 2018. However, in 2018, about 86 percent of students in SSA enrolled with public providers. Interestingly, SSA also experienced the greatest shift toward the private provision of higher education. For example, between 2006 and 2018, the share of students attending public HEIs in countries such as Tanzania fell by 24 percentage points while that of South Africa and Ghana fell by between 9 and 13 percentage points (Williams & Usher, 2022). In contrast, in countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Kenya and Uganda, private HEIs are growing rapidly. In South Africa for instance, in 2021, there were 26 public HEIs compared to 124 private HEIs (Williams & Usher, 2022; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2023).

Overall, HEIs in Africa have experienced rapid growth in recent years (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2023). This is due partly to the increasing size of the gross tertiary education enrollment ratio (i.e., "the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education" (World Bank, 2024). For example, according to the World Bank (2024), gross tertiary enrollment in SSA increased from 4 percent to 10 percent between 2000 and 2020. However, this is below the global average of 19 percent to 40 percent for the same period. Similarly, Williams and Usher (2022) argue that enrollments in HEIs in SSA increased by 124 percent between 2006 and 2018 and doubled in countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Burkina Faso and Tanzania. The increase in enrollment for higher education has resulted in challenges such as overcrowding because of the lack of investment in infrastructure (Njifen, 2024; Teferra, 2013b). Notwithstanding the growth in enrollment rates, many scholars have raised concerns about limited access to higher education among the youth in Africa. Enrollment rates for higher education in SSA are moderate compared to other regions of the world (Gangwar & Bassett, 2021). For example, in 2021, the enrollment rate for higher education in Africa was 9 percent compared to 26 percent for South Asia and 84 percent for North America (World Bank, 2024a). This is also due partly to the inability of HEIs to increase the number of faculty members amid aging faculty and the lack of incentives to attract younger staff (Jaumont, 2016).

Government funding for higher education has been insufficient over the years, and therefore limits access despite the increasing demand for higher education (Amin & Ntembe, 2021; Oketch, 2016). In SSA, government spending for tertiary education is estimated at 21 percent compared to 27 percent and 43 percent on secondary education and primary education, respectively (World Bank, 2024a; Gangwar & Bassett, 2021). However, there are also variations in public spending on higher education as a proportion of the education budget. For instance, in Namibia, government spending on tertiary education as a total percentage of education is about 51 percent compared to 7 percent for Mauritius and 4 percent for Guinea-Bissau (World Bank, 2024b). Some of the reasons that account for low government spending on higher education include: inadequate expenditure on higher education as a percentage of the overall government

² According to Williams and Usher (2022: p. 7), comprehensive universities are defined as "institutions that deliver predominantly programs at [The International Standard Classification of Education] (ISCED) level 6 or higher in four or more discrete fields of study. These fields of study should include both hard sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, engineering) and arts or social sciences. This tends to be the default category for institutions classified as universities in cases where national systems do not separate their institutions into comprehensive and specialized universities." By contrast, specialized universities "offer programs at ISCED level 6 or higher and award their own degrees in a narrow set of disciplines. These disciplines are usually concentrated on a certain theme, such as education, religion, engineering, agriculture, fine arts, or business."

budget; inter-sectoral competition for limited financial resources; and low prioritization of higher education by many governments in Sub-Saharan African countries (Pillay, 2010; Teferra & Altbach, 2003). It is therefore not surprising that HEIs in SSA are among the most challenged (Teferra, 2005; 2013b). According to Teferra (2014), policies pursued by development institutions, especially by the World Bank, have greatly affected funding for higher education in Africa. This is because of the belief that returns on investments in education are higher at the primary and secondary education levels than at the higher education level. This belief has led to investments in primary and secondary education by many African countries at the expense of higher education. In this regard, over the past years, funding policies and practices for higher education in Africa have been influenced by international organizations.

Financing higher education in Africa is a difficult endeavor—one that can be attributed to factors such as the high and increasing unit cost of higher education and the pressure for increasing total students enrolled (Johnstone, 2004; Teferra, 2013b). As mentioned earlier, over the past decades funding for higher education in Africa has been the preserve of the government. For instance, many public universities across Africa are fully funded by governments as part of efforts to increase access to all eligible citizens. However, the scarce nature of financial resources presents a challenge, hence affecting the financial sustainability of many public universities. As part of efforts to address the financing challenges facing HEIs, strategies such as cost-sharing have been adopted in many countries (Oketch, 2023; Joaquim & Cerdeira, 2020). According to Oketch (2023), HEIs such as Makerere University in Uganda have adopted cost-sharing strategies as a way to diversify their funding sources. A similar approach has been applied in countries like Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia (Oketch, 2023; Teferra, 2013b). Examples of cost-sharing approaches include the establishment of student loan projects to support those in financial need. However, the evidence suggests that student loan projects across Africa are not without problems (Gurgand et al., 2023).

Aside from cost-sharing, other strategies for addressing the financial sustainability challenges facing HEIs include income-generating activities where public universities mobilize resources to support their operations through, for example, the introduction of private programs. This phenomenon has been termed the “privatization of public universities” where students who are unable to get admission through the regular stream are admitted on a fee-paying basis (Teferra, 2013b; Ishengoma, 2023). Other income-generating activities include establishing businesses such as bookshops, renting facilities on a commercial basis, and engagements in research and consultancy services, among many others (Varghese & Panigrahi, 2023). In addition, public-private partnerships are increasingly becoming a strategy for financing higher education in Africa (see Box 1 below). However, an often-neglected aspect of HEI funding in Africa relates to philanthropic donations by private foundations, diaspora, alumni, and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

BOX 1

Public-Private Partnerships for Higher Education in Africa

A structure known as a public-private partnership (PPP) involves the use of the private sector in the provision of public services and has emerged as an effective mechanism for improving quality and access to the provision of higher education. According to Draxler (2015, p. 445), PPP occurs when the two entities (e.g., the government and the private sector) share with each other (through formal or informal agreements) their investments, risks, responsibilities, and benefits. Some scholars have argued that PPP is a global policy model aimed at transforming HEIs. In the area of philanthropy to higher education, PPP includes private sector involvement—in both the provision of and privatization

of services. For example, many philanthropic organizations have been involved in higher education in Africa and other developing countries (Srivastava & Oh, 2010). In terms of the provision of services, in many African countries HEIs face numerous challenges, most prominent being limited government funding and support. From a pluralistic perspective, PPP is often proposed as an alternative to address this challenge because it allows for the creation of diversity in education service provision and cross-sector learning. The argument is that PPP enhances efficiency and effectiveness and promotes greater accountability (Ansari, 2024). Additionally, PPPs have become common because it is believed that they enhance funding for higher education and also broaden commitments toward achieving development goals. Thus, in many developing countries, the involvement of the private sector in HEIs acts as a stimulant and also takes pressure off the government in the provision of services (Draxler, 2015).

For HEIs in developing countries, PPP takes different forms such as private higher education, privatization of public universities, adoption of business-like approaches and practices in higher education, the growing role of multinational education businesses, the rise of tuition fees and student debt and casualization of staff (Languille, 2020). The literature suggests that private HEIs are on the increase in many African countries and this growth is due partly to the burgeoning demand for higher education that cannot be met by public HEIs (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020; Swanzy et al., 2023). To this end, the private sector supports governments' efforts to make higher education accessible.

While the literature on PPPs abounds, it focuses mostly on general education (Languille, 2017) with minimal specific focus on higher education (Languille, 2020). The scant literature available on PPPs in higher education focuses on infrastructural development and service provision (Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016). In the case of Tanzania, Mgaiwa and Poncian (2016) highlight how PPPs have led to an increase in the number of private higher education providers in recent years, which has increased student enrollment. The Tanzanian government also finances higher education provision through the Higher Education Students' Loans Board (HESLB), which provides funding (i.e., loans) for students of both private and public HEIs. According to Mgaiwa and Poncian (2016), the provision of funding for higher education through the HESLB reflects a shared responsibility between the government and the private sector.

Other forms of PPPs in higher education include infrastructure ownership transfer, where the government transfers the ownership of institutions to the private sector to operate and manage. In Senegal, PPPs have been instrumental in the provision of a higher education infrastructure, specifically through student housing projects. The project is implemented through a build-operate and transfer model. Another component of PPPs in higher education is the provision of state subsidies for students in private HEIs through a voucher mechanism (Languille, 2020).

While recognizing the importance of PPPs in higher education, concerns have also been raised about their efficiency and effectiveness and their ability to promote access and win-win arrangements (Languille, 2020). For instance, in Tanzania, PPPs in higher education have had limited impact on improving the quality of education because most private HEIs are motivated by profits, admitting more students over their admission and infrastructural capacity. This negatively affects the quality of education offered to students (Mgaiwa & Poncian, 2016).

5 African Philanthropic Trends, Practices and Actors Supporting Higher Education in Africa

In recent years, discussions of the importance of African philanthropy in supporting higher education in Africa have gained much attention in policy circles as well academic discourse (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2020; Thaver & Abrahams, 2021). African philanthropists have been called upon to support higher education financing given the substantial gap in government funding for higher education (Bruns & Wigley, 2021). According to Thaver and Abrahams (2021, p. 6), in 2020, the total philanthropic income received by 10 South African Universities in 2020 was ZAR 2.31 billion (USD 121.16 million) and represented a significant increase from the previous year (i.e., ZAR 1.55 billion in 2019)³. As mentioned earlier, African philanthropy is categorized into formal, informal and hybrid dimensions (Mati, 2016; Fowler, 2017; Fowler & Mati, 2019; Kumi, 2019). In this review, the discussions focus on private foundations, HNWLs, alumni, CSR, diaspora, and faith-based giving.

Foundations: African Philanthropic Foundations and Higher Education Funding

The establishment of African philanthropic foundations has increased in recent years. As Kumi (2022) highlights, although there is a lack of information on African philanthropic foundations in the academic literature, their organizational forms include independent foundations, community foundations, charitable trusts, and corporate foundations. In terms of the focus of African philanthropic foundations, the education sector broadly defined remains the highest recipient of philanthropic funding in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon (Kumi, 2022). This finding aligns with the observation in the literature that education remains a top priority of philanthropic organizations (Campden Wealth Limited and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, 2021). Specifically, in the case of philanthropic funding for higher education in South Africa, empirical evidence suggests that in 2020, funding from trusts and foundations accounted for about 50 percent of all philanthropic funding to 10 HEIs in South Africa. Similarly, in 2013, funding from trusts and foundations was about 61 percent of all philanthropic funding (Thaver & Abrahams, 2021). Similar findings on the contributions of charitable trusts and foundations to supporting HEIs have been highlighted in countries like the UK and the U.S. (Kaplan, 2024; Beney et al., 2023).

However, it is worth noting that across Africa, external philanthropic foundations remain the largest donors to HEIs. For example, Jaumont (2016) argues that American philanthropic foundations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, and MacArthur Foundation are the largest donors to higher education institutions in many African countries. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, for instance, provided about USD 80.9 million to the University of Cape Town in South Africa while the Rockefeller Foundation gave USD 42.5 million to Makerere University in Uganda between 2003 and 2013 (Jaumont, 2016). Other foundations such as the Kresge Foundation have also invested about USD 40.2 million into HEIs in Southern African countries since it began funding in 1989 (Thompson, 2023). These observations affirm Samoff and Carrol's (2004) argument that HEIs in Africa have been highly dependent on resources from external sources, particularly from the United States.

³ The Annual Survey of Philanthropy in Higher Education (ASPIHE) in South Africa is a study conducted to provide an in-depth overview of philanthropic support for HEIs in South Africa. The participating HEIs are 10 out of the 26 South African universities. The participating universities are: Durban University of Technology, Tshwane University of Technology, University of Cape Town, University of the Free State, University of Johannesburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Pretoria, University of Stellenbosch, University of the Western Cape and University of the Witwatersrand. For details of the ASPIHE, see <https://inyathelo.org.za/images/researchreports/ASPIHEReport2021.pdf>

While acknowledging the role of external philanthropic foundations in supporting higher education in Africa, recent years have also witnessed the involvement of African philanthropic foundations established by HNWI in promoting higher education largely in the form of scholarship provision. Many HNWI establish their own foundations and channel their support through them. According to the Motsepe Foundation based in South Africa, in 2017 the Foundation spent ZAR 55.2 million (USD 4 million) in bursary funding for higher education students and provided 1,480 bursaries across 21 universities in South Africa. The funding aims to support South African students from low-income households and focus on STEM courses such as engineering and medicine. Apart from the bursary program, the Foundation also supports tertiary students through the STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) scholarships and the Martha Rose Scholarship for promising nursing and psychology students (Motsepe Foundation, 2024).

In Nigeria, the Aliko Dangote Foundation also provides scholarship opportunities to tertiary students (Aliko Dangote Foundation, 2024). Another African philanthropist, Strive Masiyiwa, has through his Higher Life Foundation provided over 250,000 scholarships and leadership training to higher education institutions (Higher Life Foundation, 2024). The Higher Life Foundation also launched the Delta Philanthropies Doctoral Research and Fellowship Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education Science and Technology Development (MoHTESTD) of Zimbabwe. The program seeks to offer opportunities to encourage research and innovations in specific areas to promote the development of the Zimbabwean economy (Higher Life Foundation, 2018).

What clearly emerges from the literature is that while African philanthropic foundations support HEIs, this giving is mainly in the form of provision of scholarships. Importantly, many African philanthropists tend to focus their philanthropic giving for HEIs in their own countries, although a few do engage in cross-border giving. For instance, in 2014, the TY Danjuma Foundation in Nigeria gave USD 5 million to the University of Cape Town to support research aimed at addressing the socio-economic and political challenges facing Africa (Schwier et al., 2020). Similarly, the Nigerian philanthropist Afe Babalola provided GBP 10 million to Kings College London aimed at establishing the Aare Afe Babalola African Centre for Transnational Education to provide access to education and other opportunities to African students (Kings College London, 2023). The Mo Ibrahim Foundation also provides scholarships to develop the talent of outstanding young Africans in select universities in the UK (i.e., London Business School, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of Birmingham and Chatham House) (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2024).

Although African philanthropists provide scholarships to African HEIs, the empirical evidence suggests that a limited number of students benefit from such projects. According to a recent study on access to higher education in Ghana, Kenya and Uganda, Lawson et al. (2023) found that although many higher education students consider scholarships helpful, access to such scholarship opportunities remains very low (i.e., 10% in Ghana; 20% in Kenya and 28% in Uganda). The findings reveal that access to government scholarships was also very limited for many students (i.e., 6% in Ghana; 18% in Kenya and 11% in Uganda). For this reason, many students financed their education through the support of their family members and friends, which is an example of horizontal or informal African philanthropy (Lawson et al., 2023). As detailed earlier, according to the AGN (2013), one-to-one philanthropy is horizontal and includes individual generosity among family members and friends such as the payment of school fees.

Another key finding that emerges from the literature is that the total amount of philanthropic donations by African philanthropic foundations and philanthropists relative to other regions of the world is low.

According to the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Insights on Voluntary Support of Education, in 2023, voluntary support for U.S. HEIs was USD 58 billion (Kaplan, 2024). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, 10 HEIs that are classified as “established clusters” raised between GBP 13 million and GBP 80 million. In addition, Oxbridge (University of Oxford and University of Cambridge), on average received GBP 246.9 million as philanthropic donations between 2020 and 2022 (Beney et al., 2023, p. 28). In the case of Australia and New Zealand, 30 institutions raised a total of USD 1.042 billion which included a single gift of USD 250 million by Geoffrey Cumming to the University of Melbourne’s Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity (South & Krishnaswamy, 2023). On the other hand, for many HEIs in Africa, a comprehensive database on the amount of philanthropic donations they receive is lacking. It is also worth clarifying that there are significant country variations in the reporting of philanthropic donations to HEIs. In South Africa, philanthropic donations to universities are publicly available through the Annual Survey of Philanthropy in Higher Education (ASPIHE). Evidence from ASPIHE indicates that in 2020, for example, total philanthropic donations to 10 participating HEIs in 2020 was ZAR 2.31 billion (equivalent to USD 164.14 million), higher than ZAR 1.55 billion (equivalent to USD 110.1 million) in 2019 (Thaver & Abrahams, 2023). Apart from the ASPIHE, there is no public database on philanthropic donations to HEIs, which accounts for the lack of data on philanthropic inflows to HEIs in Africa. This lack of information suggests the need for the creation of a comprehensive database like the CASE Insights on Voluntary Support of Education. Unfortunately, the CASE report does not cover philanthropic donations to HEIs in Africa.

Alumni Philanthropy and Higher Education in Africa

Alumni play significant roles in the development of HEIs in Africa through their networks and philanthropic activities. Indeed, alumni philanthropy serves as a primary source of support for many HEIs through their volunteering, advocacy, influencing and shaping public opinion, and communication roles (Simonetti, 2013; Kaplan, 2024). In this review, alumni philanthropy is defined as “philanthropic giving undertaken by alumni associations of educational institutions to support their alma mater.” These alumni associations are often organized, formal networks of individuals who share either educational or programmatic affiliations (Campbell and Baxter, 2019; Kumi, 2024). Despite their significant contributions to HEIs, many African universities do not have a reputation for effectively deploying their alumni in the mobilization of resources (e.g., human, financial, and networking) to support their activities (Teferra, 2014; Campbell & Baxter, 2019; Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2020). For example, Tamrat and Teferra (2020) argue that there is a lack of philanthropic and alumni tradition among HEIs in Ethiopia, which in turn results in limited institutional diversification of resources. Notwithstanding, in recent years efforts have been made by some HEIs to tap into the potential of alumni philanthropy as an alternative mechanism for financing HEIs in Africa (Ishengoma, 2023; Teferra, 2014; Rust, 2012). Thus, alumni philanthropy has remained an untapped resource for HEIs despite the willingness of alumni to give. According to a recent study on alumni giving by MasterCard Foundation Scholars in Africa, Swartz et al. (2022) found that 55 percent of tertiary alumni are internally motivated to give, and the majority feel they are responsible for having a positive impact on their communities. Alumni giving takes various forms including financial gifts, time, material goods, skills or expertise, and many others (Swartz et al., 2022; Campbell & Baxter, 2019).

Although many HEIs in Africa do not have ultra-high-net-worth alumni that their counterparts in Europe and North America have (McCarthy, 2019), there are vibrant alumni associations and individuals across many institutions who contribute significantly toward the development of their alma mater. According to Thaver and Abrahams (2021), in South Africa, philanthropic giving from alumni constitutes an important component of individual giving to HEIs. However, the alumni participation rate (i.e., alumni who give back to

their university) is relatively low (1.14%), although this percentage is similar to HEIs in the UK and Ireland (1.25%) and the U.S. (1.45%) (Beney et al., 2023). While there is no aggregated data on philanthropic giving by alumni of HEIs in Africa, Rust (2012) observed that the contribution of alumni donations to South African universities is less than 10 percent of the overall income. A similar observation about the inability of alumni to contribute to the growth of universities in Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda has been found in the literature (Bizimana et al., 2020). This is in stark contrast to the support provided by alumni in countries such as the UK and the U.S. For example, Kaplan (2024) found that the estimated voluntary support of alumni in the US in 2023 was about USD 12 billion which accounted for about 20.7 percent of total funds raised.

Factors that account for the inability of HEIs in Africa to raise significant resources from their alumni include the small number of wealthy alumni, a lack of fundraising structures and negative student experiences, which result in low interest in supporting their alma mater (Rust, 2012; Rankin & Oloruntoba, 2019). For example, Rankin and Oloruntoba (2019) argue that many students of HEIs in Africa are not encouraged to think about giving or endowing funds to their alma mater because of their negative student experiences. At the same time, Bizimana et al. (2020) found that among university students in Ghana, Rwanda, and Kenya, their academic and non-academic experiences positively affected their willingness to participate in university-related activities after graduation. Notwithstanding these challenges, alumni of HEIs in countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, Rwanda, Uganda and Ghana are known to support the development of their alma mater through, for example, mentoring, volunteering, advocacy and financial support. An issue of concern for alumni philanthropy among many HEIs in Africa is that existing studies fail to quantify the contributions of the alumni to the development of their alma mater. Moreover, there are limited studies that map out the alumni philanthropy landscape in Africa. Although there are country-specific studies on alumni philanthropy, a gap exists in the reporting of data that would allow for cross-country comparison.

Corporate Philanthropy and Higher Education in Africa

Corporations have a long history of engaging in philanthropic activities to support HEIs in Africa. According to Jaumont (2016), foundations established by corporations are the second most important type of philanthropic organizations for African HEIs. In recent years, many corporations, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) goals, establish foundations as instruments or mechanisms for giving to HEIs. For example, the Higher Life Foundation was established by Strive Masiyiwa to implement philanthropic activities including supporting higher education through the provision of scholarships and leadership training (Higher Life Foundation, 2024). Similarly, Aliko Dangote established the Aliko Dangote Foundation and supports higher education in Africa as part of its philanthropic activities (Aliko Dangote Foundation, 2024).

As Srivastava and Oh (2010) argue, the partnership between corporations and higher education is touted as advantageous in financing higher education, especially in developing countries given the limited resources many HEIs face. Partnerships between corporations and HEIs are considered efficient, effective and ideologically neutral. At the same time, concerns have been raised about the ideological neutrality and self-interest of corporations in their support of HEIs (Srivastava & Oh, 2010). In the field of education, the involvement of corporations aims to foster quality, entrepreneurship, innovations and measurable impact. The contributions of corporate philanthropy to HEIs in Africa take different forms such as direct contributions (e.g., donations) and partnerships (Udo-Umoren, 2019). Corporations have played significant roles in supporting HEIs through infrastructural development in many African countries (Ebekozien et al.,

2023; Massimo et al., 2024). For instance, according to Ebekozi et al. (2023), private sector organizations have the potential to address the infrastructural gaps facing many public HEIs in Nigeria, given that government funding has been inadequate. Similarly, in the case of Zimbabwe, Massimo et al. (2024) also argue that public-private partnership in the provision of infrastructural development for HEIs is considered a sustainable alternative to government funding.

Aside from corporate infrastructural support, existing literature suggests that in countries like South Africa, corporations support HEIs through direct funding and corporate trusts and foundations (Thaver & Abrahams, 2021). In 2020, among the 10 South African HEIs that participated in the ASPIHE, income from the private sector accounted for 26 percent (although this was a decline from 38 percent and 30 percent for 2019 and 2018, respectively). The contributions of the private sector to HEIs in South Africa in 2020 increased to over ZAR 500 million compared to ZAR 271 million in 2019. Corporations in the telecommunications sector such as MTN have been supporting HEIs by providing them with technological infrastructure, online learning resources and student welfare (Thaver & Abrahams, 2021).

In Ghana, for example, MTN provides scholarships for undergraduate students of public HEIs through the MTN Ghana Foundation Bright Scholarship (MTN Ghana Foundation, 2024). The company has invested about GH 13.5 million (USD 1.35 million) into the scholarship scheme (Business and Financial Times, 2023). Similarly, the Aliko Dangote Foundation has provided over NGN 1 billion (USD 629,069) to Nigerian Universities such as Bayero University and Otuoke University in Bayelsa State. The foundation also donated a housing complex that hosts 2,160 students at Ahmadu Bello University for NGN 1.2 billion (USD 761,784) (Aliko Dangote Foundation, 2024). What emerges strongly from the literature is that while corporations support HEIs, there is relatively limited information on their engagements. Moreover, the existing literature on corporate philanthropy and HEIs tends to focus on the involvement of bigger multilateral corporations and HNWI and their corporate philanthropy to support large projects while neglecting examples of small and medium-scale enterprises. More importantly, the underlying motivations of corporations in supporting HEIs in Africa is also an area that is less studied in the literature. Additionally, the conflation of HNWI and their corporate foundations in supporting higher education has blurred the distinction between individual and corporate philanthropy. As mentioned earlier, many HNWI established corporate foundations to undertake their philanthropic activities, which is akin to “philanthrocapitalism” or “Africapitalism” (Eikenberry & Mirabella, 2018; Fowler, 2016). A concern raised against HNWI and their philanthropic activities is that they tend to focus on issues that serve their interests, hence they cherry-pick their interventions and fail to address structural issues in society (Fowler, 2016).

Endowments and Higher Education in Africa

Aside from corporate philanthropy, endowments are another form of philanthropic donations to HEIs in Africa. According to Teferra (2015, p. 22), in Africa, “South Africa leads in endowment drives for building scholarly institutions and programs.” He argues that in 2000, the University of Cape Town generated about ZAR 107 million (USD 10 million) and was able to build endowments for four chairs, namely: the Nelson Mandela Chair of the Humanities, the Lesley Hill Chair of Plant Biology, the Pola Pasvolsky Chair of Conservation Biology, and the Discovery Chair of Exercise and Sports Science. Among other forms of endowments created for HEIs in Africa, one example is the Africa Science and Technology Endowment Fund established in 2010 by multilateral agencies in Africa (Teferra, 2010). At the country level, in recent years, some African HEIs have established endowment funds to support their activities. As Teferra (2015)

observes, South African universities lead in efforts to build endowment funds for HEIs. For example, the University of Cape Town Fund has provided over USD 60 million in funding to the university through its alumni, individual donors, corporations and foundations (University of Cape Town, 2024). Similarly, other South African HEIs like the University of Pretoria have a pool of endowment funds of ZAR 14.81 billion and ZAR 7.42 billion, respectively. Universities such as Stellenbosch University (ZAR 5 billion), the University of the Free State (ZAR 132 million), and the University of Witwatersrand (ZAR 3.6 billion) have similarly established endowment funds (Business Tech, 2023). Other African HEIs, such as the University of Nairobi (Endowment Fund), University of Ghana (University of Ghana Endowment Fund), Makerere University (Makerere University Endowment Fund), and Cuttington University (Cuttington University Alumni Association Endowment Fund) among many others, have also established endowment funds to mobilize resources to support their operations.

While the establishment of endowments for HEIs in Africa has gained much attention and prominence in recent years, there is limited data on endowments established by African philanthropists to support HEIs. As mentioned earlier, many African philanthropists support HEIs through the direct provision of scholarships and leadership training through their private foundations. Therefore, the establishment of endowments in HEIs by many African philanthropists is still a rarity. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that for some HEIs in Africa, their endowments are established with funding from philanthropic organizations outside Africa, including corporate foundations. For example, the Mastercard Foundation has supported the Ashesi University in Ghana by establishing the Mastercard Foundation Endowment for Educational Excellence⁴.

Diaspora Philanthropy and Higher Education in Africa

In recent years, diaspora philanthropy, defined as the “charitable giving of people who live outside their country of origin to support causes that benefit their homeland” (Afsal & Reshmi, 2023, p. 1), is gaining much attention in policy circles and academic discourse on higher education (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2020). Diaspora philanthropy includes donations of goods, money, time, knowledge and skills, labor, and other assets that migrants make for the social benefit of their broader communities (Flanigan, 2017).

The transfer of resources by migrants to their communities of origin is recognized as a civic or public responsibility (Johnson, 2007). Diaspora philanthropy is considered a self-sustaining enterprise that has the potential to contribute to national development (Espinosa, 2016). Informed by the increasing recognition of the role of diaspora philanthropy in promoting higher education in Africa, the African Union together with the Institute of African Studies at Carleton University organized the Continental Forum on the Role of the Diaspora in Higher Education, Research, and Innovation in Africa in November 2019 (Rankin & Oloruntoba, 2019). The forum sought to highlight the contributions of the role of African diaspora scholars and diaspora philanthropy in promoting higher education.

The existing literature highlights a positive and strong relationship between migrant remittance flow and investment in education⁵ (Gyimah-Brempong & Aseidu, 2015). Remittance provides opportunities for investments in higher education (Arif et al., 2019). Arif et al. (2019) examined the role of remittances in

⁴ For details of the endowment, see <https://www.ashesi.edu.gh/ashesi-university-foundation-canada-receives-endowment-from-mastercard-foundation-to-strengthen-higher-education-in-africa/>

⁵ In 2022, personal remittance received for sub-Saharan Africa was USD 53.14 billion (World Bank, 2024). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=ZG>

promoting the development of higher education among the top eight remittance-receiving countries and found that migrant remittance was highly influential in the development of higher education in African countries such as Egypt and Nigeria. Migrant remittances are known to increase higher education spending by supporting the cost of, for example, tertiary education in many countries (World Bank, 2020).

In financing higher education in Africa, some scholars have argued that the African diaspora could play vital roles through the provision of 'diaspora bonds' as an alternative source of funding (Ketkar & Ratha, 2011; Olanrewaju & Olaniran, 2020). For diaspora bonds to be an effective funding alternative for higher education in Africa, Ketkar and Ratha (2011) suggest that it requires investor protection (e.g., securitization of existing or future flow assets, partial guarantee from reputable donor agencies, provision of incentives for countries to produce the desired returns, establishing independent state authorities to manage funds, and issuance of bonds against achieved results), especially when there is lack of faith in government's ability to earn a reasonable return on the investment or to service the debt.

The literature establishes that diaspora increasingly plays an important role in higher education through internationalization and knowledge production, and for this reason, many countries have put in place policies and structures to strengthen their relationship with the diaspora through higher education (Bamberger, 2022). The African Union seeks to harness the potential of diaspora academics in revitalizing higher education in Africa (Setrana, 2019). Countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Zambia have put in place programs to engage the African academic diaspora (Setrana, 2019; Woldegiyorgis, 2021). While there is no comprehensive database on African Diaspora Academics (ADA), some scholars estimated that there were more than 300,000 highly qualified Africans in the diaspora globally in 2009, of which 30,000 were PhD holders (Ogachi, 2015; Onsado, 2007). Zeleza (2013) also found that in 2008 there were 297 African-born academics employed across 124 universities and colleges in Canada. In the United States, in 2009, it was estimated that African-born academics working in American universities and colleges as faculty were between 20,000 and 25,000 (Zeleza, 2013). This figure would likely have increased in recent years, although accurate data is not available to prove this. For instance, based on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Woldegiyorgis (2021) suggests that there are about 1,600 PhD holders among the Ethiopian diaspora in Canada and the United States.

The literature highlights that ADA play a significant role in promoting higher education in Africa through their collaborative engagements with African universities in areas such as research, scholarship and service (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2020; Foulds & Zeleza, 2014; Setrana, 2019; Zeleza, 2013). In the case of Nigeria, Fateye et al. (2024) document how the Nigerian diaspora collaborated with local universities in co-designing and teaching undergraduate STEM programs. The outcome of the collaboration resulted in the provision of culturally responsive, student-centered educational opportunities, which contributed to addressing the STEM gap among undergraduates. The literature further establishes that ADA have vibrant relationships with their counterparts in Africa and engage through diverse ways such as research collaborations, supervision of post-graduate students and curriculum development (Fateye et al., 2024; Foulds and Zeleza, 2014; Oanda and Obonyo, 2021). Zeleza (2013) also describes how ADA contribute to the development of tertiary education in Africa through the consultancy work they undertake in the areas of leadership and networking for HEIs. Additionally, they provide items such as books, journals and equipment to universities, and act as reviewers for promotion, external examiners and mentoring among many other forms of support.

Despite the scholastic benefits of ADA, several challenges have emerged from their collaborations with African HEIs, particularly unequal power relations or hierarchical structures, inadequate facilities, institutional bureaucracies, and attitudinal obstacles such as unrealistic expectations and negative perceptions (Oanda & Obonyo, 2021; Rankin & Oloruntoba, 2019; Zeleza, 2013). For instance, established African HEIs with better infrastructure tend to attract more support from ADA than their counterparts that were established recently, highlighting a degree of inequality among HEIs (Oanda & Obonyo, 2021). A report from the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy (2020) also mentions how African HEI engagements with the diaspora sometimes bring burdensome administrative tasks for academic staff. These challenges highlight the institutional-level issues associated with diaspora engagements, but there are also wider macro-level challenges, such as political and economic uncertainty in many African countries, which negatively affect the extent of engagements between African HEIs and the diaspora (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2020).

Aside from ADA that constitutes an important aspect of diaspora philanthropy for African HEIs, many institutions also mobilize the support of alumni and friends in the diaspora, as well as other people of the diaspora broadly, to advance their mission. Many African HEIs mobilize both financial and non-financial resources such as volunteering, networking, and in-kind donations. For instance, some African HEIs mobilize support from African philanthropists in the diaspora, diaspora foundations and African foundations (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2020). Interestingly, the challenge is that there is no available data on the contributions of 'alumni and friends' in the diaspora to the development of African HEIs. Anecdotal evidence from the literature suggests that HEIs in Africa tend to have low online visibility in mobilizing their alumni in the diaspora compared to their foreign counterparts. This is partly due to a lack of institutional capacity such as limited human resources and the underdevelopment of fundraising infrastructure in many African HEIs (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2020; Camp, 2018). In a study on fundraising challenges faced by the University of Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa, Camp (2018) observed that a perceived lack of competent staff for fundraising activities and leadership challenges resulted in a dysfunctional fundraising culture within the university. Other factors highlighted by Camp (2018) include poor brand image and increased competition from other HEIs. Aside from these internal factors mentioned, challenges such as economic uncertainty and bad publicity affected the university's ability to generate enough income from its fundraising activities.

BOX 2 Faith-Based Giving and Higher Education in Africa

Another important dimension of African philanthropy is faith-based giving, which has played a significant role in supporting HEIs in Africa through, for example, the establishment and funding of private HEIs. The importance of faith-based giving for higher education in Africa is discussed below.

An important trend regarding HEI funding is the role played by the Islamic practice of waqf in financing HEIs in many African countries such as Egypt, Nigeria and Kenya. According to Mahmood and Ab Rahman (2015), the concept of an endowment-based university through the waqf has been used by Al-Azhar University to provide free education to local and international students in Egypt. Similarly in Kenya, Abdulrahman (2020) documents how waqf could be used in financing students of HEIs through the Islamic student loan scheme. In the case of Nigeria, Adewale and Zubaedy (2019) highlight the need for capitalizing on waqf in the provision of infrastructure for HEIs. The evidence from the literature suggests that the use of waqf is a common practice for financing HEIs in many

Islamic countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Pakistan (Mahamood & Ab Rahman, 2015; Uman & Ab Rahman, 2021). Waqf becomes a more widely recognized alternative funding mechanism for HEIs in some African countries. However, empirical studies on the role of waqf in promoting the sustainability of HEIs in Africa remain relatively limited. Moreover, the use of waqf as an alternative funding mechanism for HEIs is mostly common in Islamic countries and the absence of an enabling environment for promoting faith-based philanthropy in many African countries serves as a challenge.

The literature suggests that religious organizations have contributed immensely toward the development of HEIs in Africa. Specifically, religious organizations provide philanthropic support such as funding to HEIs and play a significant role in the establishment especially of private HEIs in many African countries (Swanzy et al., 2023; Ishengoma, 2023). Religious organizations serve as owners, providers, and great influencers of HEIs in many African countries. Moreover, religious organizations provide funding for HEIs in countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, and Kenya, among many others (Adebayo & Jawondo, 2018). Regarding philanthropic giving, the recent ASPIHE conducted among 10 South African HEIs revealed that donations from religious organizations were relatively low (i.e., 2%), compared to individuals (75%) and trusts and foundations (9%) (Thaver & Abrahams, 2021).

However, while religious organizations might not make substantial financial contributions to HEIs in Africa, their role in the establishment of private HEIs cannot be underestimated (Ishengoma, 2023; Lo & Haron, 2016). Using a content analysis of 80 websites in seven African countries in Ghana, Nigeria, Congo, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, and Somalia, Karram (2011) found that private HEIs affiliated with religious organizations in Africa experienced the largest growth over the past decade. Religious organizations have been instrumental in the establishment of private religious HEIs. In Tanzania, for example, about 80 percent of private HEIs are church-affiliated and they account for about 34 percent of total enrollment for higher education in the country. Interestingly, the number of private HEIs in Tanzania outnumbers public HEIs (Ishengoma, 2023). In the case of Uganda, many nonprofit private HEIs are established by religious and philanthropic organizations. Religious groups such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Adventist Church and the Protestant Church have all established private HEIs (Oboko, 2013). Similarly, Islamic organizations have also established private HEIs across the African continent, such as the Muslim University of Morogoro (MUM) in Tanzania, Islamic University in Uganda, Islamic University College in Ghana, Al-Hikmah University in Nigeria, and King Faisal University in Chad (Lo & Haron, 2016). Similar trends of the involvement of religious organizations in the provision of private HEIs have been observed in many other African countries (Swanzy et al., 2023; Oketch, 2023).

Notwithstanding the growth in religious private HEIs across Africa, concerns have also been raised about their quality assurance due to the peculiar challenges and risks they face (M. C. Diedericks & M. Diedericks, 2022). Tamrat and Teferra (2020) point out that private HEIs in Ethiopia are faced with several risks, ranging from policy and regulations, financial, teaching and learning, and infrastructure and resources, in addition to research and outreach risks, which negatively affect their survival or sustainability. Similar concerns, such as the inability of private HEIs to retain qualified staff, financial sustainability and lack of innovations, have been found in Ghana (Swanzy et al., 2023).

6 Challenges of African Philanthropic Giving for Higher Education in Africa

Philanthropic giving is an important mechanism for funding higher education in Africa. However, given that African philanthropy is an emerging field, there are several challenges, including the absence of an enabling environment for philanthropy, lack of data on philanthropic inflows to HEIs, limited capacity and infrastructure by advancement offices, and negative student experiences that affect the ability of HEIs in Africa to mobilize philanthropic giving to support their activities. These are discussed below.

Absence of an Enabling Environment for Philanthropy

Across many countries in Africa, different regulatory regimes for philanthropy exist (Moyo & Sowa, 2015; SIVIO Institute, 2023; Murisa & Satuku, 2023). However, an issue of concern is that there is no single country that has legislation specifically targeted at the philanthropic sector. For example, in Southern Africa, Murisa and Satuku (2023) found that no country had a philanthropy strategy, and existing laws hindered civil society space for philanthropy. For this reason, in many African countries, philanthropy is regulated by statutes that include administrative, financial, monetary and taxation (Moyo & Sowa, 2015). Another important issue is that many of the existing regulatory frameworks and policies for philanthropy seem outdated and have not caught up with the changing dynamics of the philanthropic sector. For instance, in many African countries, although there are no limits to cross-border philanthropic flows when conditions for documentation are met, the recent emphasis on counterterrorism, money laundering and cross-border tracking has the potential to affect the ability of HEIs to mobilize cross-border resources. Typical examples include Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Mozambique, and Tanzania (Kumi, 2024; Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2023; Murisa & Satuku, 2023). The legal environment for philanthropy is known to affect cross-border philanthropic flows. According to the Global Philanthropy Tracker 2023, in many countries laws have been enacted to regulate philanthropic organizations and individuals engaging in cross-border giving, while others have prohibited such transfers (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2023). In African countries such as Eswatini, restrictive policies have been enacted on all forms of sending and receiving cross-border donations; and in Sudan and Egypt, individuals are not allowed to send cross-border donations (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2023). Similar findings on how the legal environment affects cross-border giving have been highlighted among Southern African countries. Laws have been enacted based on the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force that aims to tackle money laundering and terrorist financing (Murisa & Satuku, 2023).

Directly related to regulations on cross-border giving is the absence of tax incentives that promote philanthropic giving in many African countries. According to Moyo and Sowa (2015), the pre-conditions for tax exemptions in many African countries are onerous and the exemptions often focus on vertical philanthropy rather than horizontal philanthropy structures that lack the capacity to qualify for such tax incentives.

Lack of Data on Philanthropic Inflows to HEIs in Africa

Although philanthropic giving in Africa is not new, there is relatively limited comprehensive data on philanthropic inflows to HEIs in Africa. Except for South Africa where ASPIHE is conducted among 10 universities, many HEIs do not share information on their philanthropic donations publicly. Unfortunately, the CASE Insights on Voluntary Support for Education does not cover HEIs in Africa. Basic information on the size of philanthropic giving is hard to find or non-existent (von Schnurbein & Perez, 2018, p. 1920). This makes it difficult for a comparative study on philanthropic donations among HEIs in Africa.

Limited Capacity and Infrastructure by HEIs to Mobilize Philanthropic Support

Mobilizing philanthropic giving for HEIs is a challenging endeavor because many of the HEIs have not made investments in capacity and infrastructure, including human resources. In the case of 10 South African HEIs, Thaver and Abrahams (2021) found that in 2020, the total number of staff for their advancement offices tasked with the responsibility for fundraising and alumni relations was 178. The study found that the number of staff at an institution is positively associated with the amount of donations received. Importantly, investments in spending on staff and alumni relations were also positively associated with the philanthropic income attracted by the universities. Thus, the more an institution spends on attracting philanthropic donations, the higher the amount in donations it receives. In other words, when HEIs undertake more fundraising and invest more in their alumni relations and staff support, it translates into higher philanthropic income (Thaver & Abrahams, 2021, p. 40). However, the challenge is that many HEIs in Africa are unable to invest in their advancement offices in such areas as human resources, data tracking, and professional development (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2020). The infrastructure for fundraising in many HEIs in Africa is underdeveloped. An example is that many advancement offices operate on lean staff, and this affects their ability to scale their activities, reach an impact, and hence are unable to mobilize sufficient philanthropic donations (Rust, 2012).

Negative Student Experience and Support from Alumni to HEIs

Alumni of HEIs have become an important target population for many institutions for mobilizing financial and non-financial contributions to support their operations. However, the literature on alumni giving in Africa establishes that students' experience is a key determinant of their intention to give back to their alma mater (Bizimana et al., 2020; Rankin & Oloruntoba, 2019). Alumni satisfaction and alumni experiences are both key factors that influence the charitable decisions of alumni. Alumni satisfaction focuses on students' experiences before graduation, while alumni experiences focus on their recent experiences with their alma mater after graduation. Alumni connectedness, which consists of relatability, dependency, and a sense of community, also influences alumni intentions of contributing to the development of their alma mater (Maulana et al., 2023). However, in many African countries, students' experiences and connectedness tend to be poor and many HEIs are unable to manage their alumni engagements optimally, which affects their ability to mobilize enough support (Maulana et al., 2023). Moreover, many HEIs in Africa often do not have up-to-date information about their alumni, and the provision of communication channels for the dissemination of university-related information remains limited. For this reason, the lack of informativeness negatively affects the satisfaction of the alumni and their willingness to support their alumni (Rust, 2012; 2017).

7 Summary and Looking Ahead

The recent years have witnessed a renewed interest in the potential of African philanthropy in contributing to the development of higher education. However, our understanding of the involvement of African philanthropy in higher education is still limited because most studies on African philanthropy focus on conceptualization issues, its role as an alternative funding source for achieving sustainable development, and regulatory frameworks. To date, existing literature does not adequately capture the complexity of African philanthropy and higher education in general. This paper aims to shed new light on how African philanthropy promotes higher education in Africa through a review of the literature. It examines African higher education and financing in general, the various dimensions (e.g., foundations, diaspora and alumni philanthropy, corporate philanthropy, and HNWI) of African philanthropy and their involvement in higher education, as well as public-private partnerships in higher education, and the challenges of African philanthropy in supporting higher education.

The paper highlights that higher education in Africa has been growing in enrollment rates but this increase is not matched by development in infrastructure and access. This is partly because of low government funding, hence making HEIs in Africa financially challenged, which negatively affects their sustainability. Many HEIs have therefore adopted strategies to address their financial sustainability challenges by diversifying their revenue streams through cost-sharing and income-generating activities. However, African philanthropy remains an under-explored area for financing HEIs, yet it has gained increasing attention from both academic and policy circles in recent years.

The findings from this paper suggest that while external philanthropic foundations are the dominant supporters of higher education in Africa, some African philanthropic foundations and trusts have supported HEIs through, for example, the provision of scholarships. Prominent examples include the Motsepe Foundation, Higher Life Foundation, Tony Elumelu Foundation, TY Danjuma Foundation and the Aliko Dangote Foundation, which all support students of HEIs. The findings further show that many African philanthropic foundations focus their support for HEIs in their own countries of origin, with a few engaging in cross-border giving. However, a challenge with scholarship provision by African philanthropic foundations is that a limited number of students benefit from such programs. Additionally, compared with the financial contributions by external philanthropic foundations, the funding provided by African philanthropic foundations to HEIs is relatively small. There is also the lack of comprehensive information on the donations made by African philanthropic foundations. Except for HEIs in South Africa, there is no publicly available information on philanthropic giving to HEIs in Africa, which makes cross-country comparisons difficult. Endowments have also become more common among HEIs in Africa, but this type of philanthropic support mostly focuses on student financial aid and research. Moreover, the paper finds that philanthropic support for HEIs in South Africa is well developed compared to that of other African countries.

The paper further highlights the significant contributions of faith-based philanthropy to HEIs in Africa, particularly through the establishment of private HEIs in countries such as Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa among many others. Importantly, the Islamic religious practice of waqf has also become an important mechanism for financing HEIs in countries such as Egypt, Kenya, and Nigeria. Moreover, the African diaspora continues to support the development of HEIs through, for example, diaspora remittances, internalization, and knowledge production. Many HEIs in Africa are therefore exploring opportunities to mobilize resources from the diaspora, including the African academic diaspora who contribute to promoting research, service and scholarship in higher education in Africa. However, challenges such as hierarchical structures, inadequate facilities, institutional bureaucracies, and attitudinal obstacles stand to limit the potential contributions of the African academic diaspora to HEIs in Africa. Notwithstanding, the paper finds that many HEIs also mobilize support from their alumni and friends in the diaspora to support their operations, but this has not been without problems, due to institutional micro-, and macro-level factors. Additionally, the paper finds that many HEIs are unable to mobilize enough resources from their alumni due partly to negative student experiences and the absence of capacity and infrastructure by advancement offices.

The paper also shows that while corporate philanthropy is increasingly gaining attention among HEIs, many corporate foundations established by African philanthropists are used as avenues for undertaking corporate social responsibility for their businesses, hence blurring the distinction between philanthropy and business interests. The support of corporations, especially the multilateral corporations, for HEIs mainly focuses on scholarships and infrastructural development. However, the literature is silent on how small- and medium-scale enterprises support HEIs in Africa. Additionally, PPPs in HEIs in Africa have gained much attention and manifest themselves in, for example, the privatization of public universities, the establishment of private

HEIs, the growing role of multinational education businesses, and the rise of tuition fees and student debts, among many others. The findings from this review suggest that the effectiveness of PPPs in promoting access to quality education in HEIs in Africa remains unclear.

This paper further demonstrates that the potential of African philanthropy to promote higher education is constrained by the absence of an enabling environment for philanthropy, lack of data on philanthropic inflows to HEIs, limited capacity and infrastructure of HEIs to mobilize philanthropic support, and negative student experiences that affect their intentions to give back to their alma mater. Although this paper is exploratory, it lays the foundation for understanding the role that African philanthropy can play in promoting higher education in Africa.

Areas for Future Research

First, as this study has demonstrated, there are relatively limited empirical studies on African philanthropy and its support for HEIs. Particularly, while there are country-specific studies on, for example, alumni philanthropy in HEIs, our understanding of the role and contributions of the different dimensions of African philanthropy to HEIs remains limited. There is also a need for comprehensive research that focuses on understanding the contributions of African philanthropy to HEIs in different countries, which will allow for cross-country comparisons in the continent. Thus, more empirical studies are needed to understand the dynamics between African philanthropy and higher education.

Second, there is the need for a continent-wide mapping of African philanthropic actors that support HEIs. Currently, information on the scope, decision-making processes, organizational finances, and instruments used by African philanthropists in supporting HEIs remains limited. Therefore, a continent-wide mapping is required to understand the dynamics of the philanthropic sector and higher education in general. The mapping would also be useful to advancement offices of HEIs in their quest for resource mobilization because it helps them identify various forms of philanthropic support for their operations.

Third, another area of research understanding is the dynamics of philanthropic inflows to HEIs in Africa. While the Annual Survey of Philanthropy in Higher Education (ASPIHE) provides useful insights, it has data from only 10 HEIs in South Africa. There is therefore a need for stakeholders in African higher education to collaborate in expanding the scope of the ASPIHE to cover more HEIs in Africa to provide a full picture of the landscape of African philanthropy in higher education. Moreover, stakeholders in the philanthropic space could advocate for the scope of the CASE Insights on Voluntary Support of Education to be expanded to HEIs in Africa. This will allow for cross-country comparisons with philanthropic support to higher education in other parts of the world.

Fourth, future research could focus on understanding how policy and regulatory frameworks for philanthropy influence philanthropic giving to African HEIs. Existing studies in other jurisdictions (e.g., Europe, North America and Asia) highlight the importance of an enabling environment in shaping philanthropic giving, but our understanding of this issue in the context of Africa remains relatively limited.

Lastly, further research could examine alumni philanthropy in African countries to understand their potential in building partnerships with their alma mater and how that contributes toward enhancing financial sustainability of HEIs in Africa. Future research in this area can contribute to both academic knowledge and practical insights.

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