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## **Capacity-Building for Improved Functioning of Higher Learning Institutions: Transformation of Ardhi Institute to a Full-Fledged Ardhi University**

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### **Abstract**

One of the challenges confronting higher learning institutions in the global south is the constrained capacity to carry out research, expand student enrolment and address pertinent problems facing local communities. This challenge has compelled institutions to solicit resources and forge partnerships to build the needed capacity for improved functioning as viable academic entities nationally and internationally. This paper analyses the capacity-building programme that has been and is still being implemented by Ardhi University in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and examines its impacts. The methods employed in examining capacity included a literature review, programme documents, reports from the University website, workshop proceedings, evaluation and facts and figure reports. Empirical evidence from these reports indicates that the capacity-building programme has increased staff with Doctoral (PhD) qualifications, increased student enrolment, research projects and publications, and national and international collaboration links. On a broader scale, the capacity built has increased Ardhi University's contribution to the national development agenda, increased national and international relations and innovative approaches to addressing community problems. This paper recommends continued capacity-building to sustain the achievements registered over the two decades and contribute to national development.

**Keywords:** Ardhi University, capacity-building, higher learning institutions, national development.

### **1. Introduction**

The role of Universities in national development cannot be overemphasised. This is mainly because several challenges emerge and call for innovative approaches to addressing them in a global world. Traditionally, the primary functions of universities have been to transmit knowledge from one generation to another and contribute toward national development (Fromhold-Eisebith, Werker, 2013). Increasingly, it is now accepted that higher education investment contributes immensely to national development and, more so, to solving community problems (Fromhold-Eisebith, Ghaed-Sharafi, Ramazan Pour Nargesi, 2020). Countries with developing economies require a high level and skilled human resource capacity to identify and leverage opportunities espoused by unexploited natural resources and intellectual capital. Equally important is to take advantage of developments in technology and contribute to innovations and higher level research knowledge for the improved livelihood of the society. In the context of globalisation and the internationalisation of education, an increased capacity becomes one of the prerequisite factors to sustain competitiveness and efficiency (Ardhi University, 2021).

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Universities have also been centres for advanced knowledge frontiers through research and innovation; and providing a high-quality workforce to serve society (Jega, 2007). Jega defines universities as: “Sites and systems of knowledge production that help men and women enjoy a richer and more meaningful life. A University prepares people for professional careers as doctors, engineers, lawyers, or teachers. It also gives a better appreciation of such fields as art, literature, history, human relations and science. In doing so, a university or college education enables individuals to participate with greater understanding in community affairs” (Jega, 2007). It is, therefore, implicit that capacity-building in terms of advanced training of academicians who are supposed to teach, conduct research and provide public services is over and above the concern of any university (Latha, 2020). The underlying assumption is that increased human resource capacity will directly affect improved functioning, efficiency and quality in teaching, research and delivery of public services.

This observation is more relevant in current times because of the transition from traditional modes of production to knowledge economies, where research and innovation are key attributes of national development (Phillips et al., 2017). Contemporary developments in both industrialised and less industrialised countries have brought up global environmental, social, political, cultural and more glaring challenges in recent times; impacts emanating from climate change and the Coronavirus pandemic. There has also been a shift from Universities being run by governments as public institutions to private universities emerging where some level of the commodification of education has been imminent (Shukry, 2017; Plante, 2015). Despite these shifting trends, Universities are expected to play a key role in applied research and coming up with innovative solutions to the increasing complexity of community problems. As centres for advanced training, universities are also expected to train qualified professional staff with the requisite skills to fit into the changing labour market and participate effectively in national and international development programmes.

Tanzania’s state of higher learning institutions (mainly universities) is still inadequate. There is a concern regarding the role of education, science and technology in national economic and social development (United Republic of Tanzania, URT, 2017). So far, Tanzania has not seen a significant impact of higher learning institutions that trickles down to people’s day-to-day lives. Poverty, diseases and ignorance are still raving communities on a considerable scale while agricultural productivity and outputs have remained at the peasant level. This has continued to perpetuate occasional famine, recurrent food shortages and disease-prone populations. Malnutrition among children and adults still prevails in many societies (URT, 2010a).

To analyse the condition of higher learning institutions in Tanzania in a more elaborate context, it is essential to review the current state of supply in terms of the number and capacity of these institutions to offer such education and its demand. Also, it is key to explore the number of prospective candidates expected to join universities. In 2004, the Government of Tanzania launched the Secondary Education Programme (SEDP) to respond to the expanded completion and pass rates at primary school vis-à-vis the participation rate in secondary education, which was one of the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2004, the transition rate from Sub-Saharan countries was recorded to be 9.4 percent for Tanzania, 23 percent for Kenya, 12 percent for Uganda, 23 percent for Liberia, 20 percent for Lesotho and 34 percent for Namibia (URT, 2010b). Member states of the East African Community have set a target of 15 to 20 percent by 2025. These targets and increased student enrolment had profound implications in terms of continued training of staff to cope with the actual and anticipated increase in the number of students. Based on these targets, the total number of students enrolled in Universities and University Colleges rose from 37,667 in 2004/05 to 95,525 in 2008/09, an increase of 153 percent. Despite the increase, this is only 3 percent transition rate from secondary to university education (URT, 2010b).

Advanced training for PhD qualifications has been considered in many countries as prerequisites for university lecturers. The underlying assumption has been that at such a level of qualification, one can conduct research independently and mentor the young. PhD qualifications have been viewed as the minimum qualifications for a university teacher to impart requisite skills and research knowledge to students. As was the case for the participation rate, the number of teachers with PhD qualifications in most Tanzanian higher learning institutions was quite low. With the exception of a few old Universities, the proportion of staff with PhD qualifications in most Universities was less than 20 percent (URT, 2010b). Based on the preceding premises, it is apparent that continued capacity-building in terms of training academic staff members to higher

degree qualifications remains one of the pre-occupations Universities will have to endeavour to achieve the anticipated goals.

### **The historical context of Ardhi University (ARU)**

The present Ardhi University (ARU) started as a Survey Training Centre (STC) in Dar es Salaam in 1956. In 1960, STC was moved to the present location called Observation Hill, nearby the University of Dar es Salaam. The first intake of students occurred in 1964 when 11 forms four leavers were enrolled for the survey technician course. In the first cohort, only seven students managed to complete the course and were awarded a survey technician certificate. In 1972, the mandate of STC was expanded, and the Centre was renamed Ardhi Institute (ARI). The expansion aimed at addressing the demand for middle-level human resources in the disciplines of land use planning and management. In 1972, two-year diploma programs in the fields of Land Surveying and Land Management and Valuation were established. In the same year, a three-year Diploma course in Urban and Rural Planning was established. In 1979, the Centre for Housing Studies (CHS); a joint project between the governments of Tanzania and the Netherlands, was established. The initial focus of CHS was to offer short courses and carry out research in housing, planning and building. Ardhi Institute became a Constituent College of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in 1997. It was named the University College of Lands and Architectural Studies (UCLAS). The move of affiliating Ardhi Institute with the University of Dar es Salaam aimed at nurturing the new college to grow and become a full-fledged university producing land-based professionals. In the year 2007, UCLAS was further transformed into Ardhi University (ARU). The new university started with a total of 1,366 students enrolled in 39 academic programmes.

At the time of affiliation with the University of Dar es Salaam in 1996, UCLAS (now Ardhi University) had only four (4) academic staff with PhD qualifications. The need to train academic staff with PhD qualifications was one of the priority issues under capacity-building strategies for UCLAS and later ARU. Deliberate efforts for training academic staff were made and implemented with great support from development partners, including Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), The World Bank, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the European Union (EU), the Norwegian Agency for Development (NORAD), the Australian Aid and International Development (AusAID) and the United States Aid and International Development (USAID). Until 2018, there were 76 academic staff members with PhD qualifications out of 252 academic staff members (ARU, 2018). Other results of the capacity-building programme are notable in many ways, including improved quality in teaching, research and public service delivery. Staff members who have graduated with PhD qualifications have been serving as academic leaders in various units within the university, and others have been appointed as leaders in many sectors of the Government.

## **2. Materials and methods**

This paper presents the capacity-building processes at Ardhi University, focusing on PhD training programmes. The key method that was used in collecting facts was a literature review through desk research. This included reviewing progress reports, activity plans, programme terminal reports, and programme evaluation reports of some programmes. ARU Facts and Figures reports provided valuable data for establishing spot and trend data. An additional literature review was carried out in developing the conceptual framework that guided subsequent analysis and synthesis. Evaluation and Programme Progress Reports were useful in drawing facts on the position of ARU with regard to its role in contributing to the national development agenda, policies and programmes. In addition to the literature review, the authors participated in workshops and meetings on programme design, implementation and review.

### **Conceptualising capacity**

Since the late 1980s, capacity as an outcome and capacity development as a process has been recurrent in terms of international development and cooperation (Baser, Morgan, 2008). Conceptualising capacity development becomes an essential benchmark for discussing capacity-building in higher learning institutions. The United Nations Development Programme (2008) sees capacity as the ability of individuals, organisations and societies to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve goals. In a broader perspective, the United Nations Development Programme views capacity as the ability of individuals, communities, institutions, organisations and social and political systems to use the natural, financial, political, social and human resources

available to pursue sustainable development. Capacity has also been regarded as the values, contacts, organisations and technical skills enabling countries, institutions, organisations and individuals to perform their tasks and achieve their development objectives ([The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000](#)). Similarly, capacity as an overall concept includes conditions that must be in place (such as knowledge, competence and effective development-oriented organisations and institutional frameworks) to make development possible ([Sida, 2000](#)). Similarly, other authors define capacity as the ability of people, organisations and society to manage their affairs ([Land et al., 2007](#)).

Capacity as a dynamic variable is an emergent concept. It grows through self-organisation and interplay of various contextual, managerial, economic, social and human factors ([Gomez, 2009](#)). It can be realised at multiple levels ranging from individuals to countries that capacity has to do with achieving set objectives using available resources. Many practitioners view capacity as a human resource issue with skills development and individual training. Capacity as skills is also widely held by both international development agencies and country governments. Therefore the critical focus in discussing capacity as a dynamic concept should be on capacity development or capacity-building ([Gomez, 2009](#)).

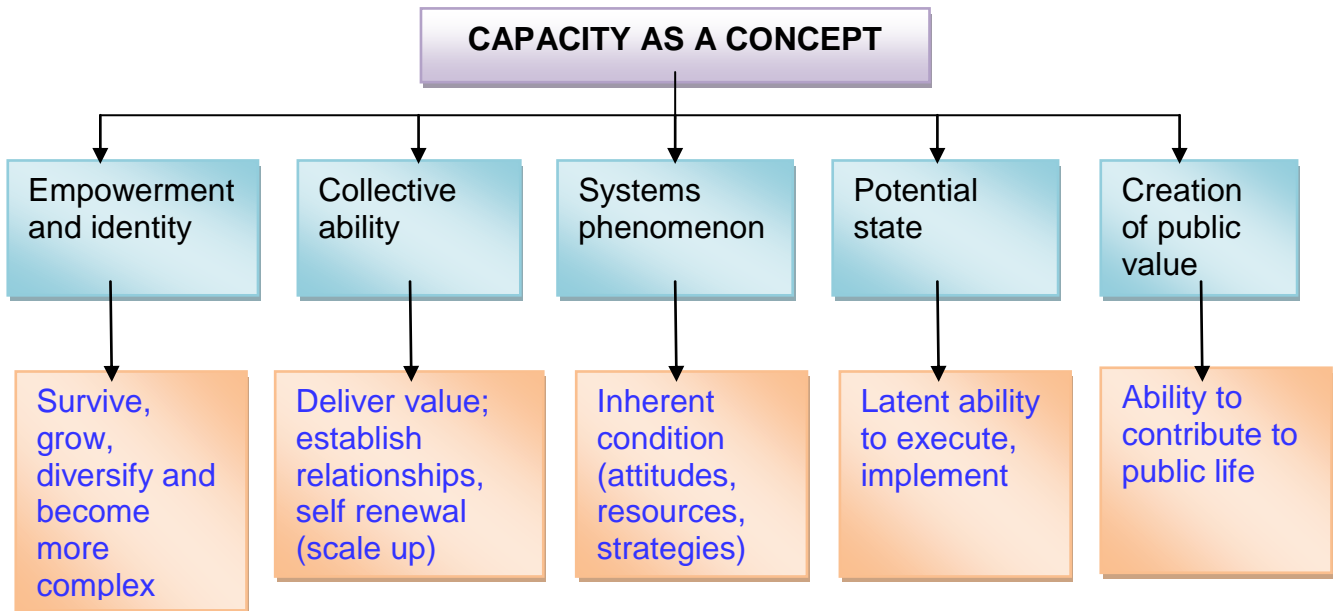
Capacity development/building is a new concept as it emerged in academic currency in the 1980s ([Gomez, 2009](#)). As used today, it has its origin in the fields of technical assistance and development cooperation. Capacity development is complementary to other concepts such as institutional building, institutional development, human resource development, development management and institutional strengthening. Over the past decade, capacity development has become a concept – an idea – that has captured many ideas and lessons from past development activities ([Lusthaus et al., 1999](#)). This concept emerged in reaction to the perceived failures of earlier technical cooperation activities and has quickly gained acceptance as the core objective of development partners' assistance programs ([Organisation for Economic..., 2005](#)).

Capacity development or capacity-building is a gradual holistic process of change that strengthens the capacities of individuals, organisations (public and private) and societies to make effective and efficient use of their resources to achieve their own goals on a sustainable basis ([GTZ, 2007](#); [Ministry of Water and Irrigation, 2008](#); [Whyte, 2004](#)). Within the many definitions, there seems to be an emerging consensus that capacity development is a process of change that involves the long term, focused on improvements to attain sustainable social and economic development. Capacity-building is demand-driven and takes place at different levels. These levels have been classified into micro (individual and project team), meso (organisation) and macro (national institutions) ([Lusthaus et al., 1999](#)). A consistent discussion on capacity as a concept has been put forward by Morgan (2006) in his report, "Study on Capacity: Change and Performance". Morgan suggests five key variables that characterise capacity as a concept. The first variable is empowerment and identity, which refers to properties that allow an organisation or system to survive, grow, diversify and become more complex.

Morgan argues that systems need power, control and space to evolve in such a way. Thus, capacity implies that people act together to take control of their own lives in some fashion. The second variable relates to collective ability, a combination of attributes that enables a system to perform, deliver value, establish relationships and renew itself. In other words, it refers to abilities that allow systems namely; individuals, groups, organisations, and groups of organisations – to be able to do something with some intention, with some sort of effectiveness, and with some sort of scale over time. A focus on abilities or, as we call them in this paper – capabilities – can help provide more operational and specific ways to deal with the broader concept of capacity. The third component of capacity refers to the state or condition inherently as a systems phenomenon. In this context, capacity is viewed as an emergent property or an interaction effect. It comes out of the dynamics involving a complex combination of attitudes, resources, strategies and skills, both tangible and intangible. It emerges from the positioning of a system within a particular context. And it usually deals with complex human activities which cannot be addressed from an exclusively technical perspective.

Additionally, the fourth variable of capacity is a potential state that is elusive and transient. It is about latent as opposed to kinetic energy. Performance, in contrast, is about execution and implementation or the result of the application/use of capacity. Given this latent quality, capacity is dependent to a large degree on intangibles. It is thus hard to induce, manage and measure. As a

state or condition, it can disappear quickly, particularly in smaller, more vulnerable structures. This potential state may require different approaches to its development, management, assessment and monitoring. The fifth variable refers to the creation of public value. Capacity in this report refers to a group or system's ability to contribute to public life positively. In most countries, different capacities compete for power, control and resources (Morgan, 2006).



**Fig. 1.** Capacity as a Concept (Morgan, 2006)

### 3. Results

#### Capacity-building and funding support

Over the years, Ardhi University has received support from the Tanzania Government and various development partners to implement its functions. The support has covered training in terms of human resource development, research grants as part of knowledge generation, procurement of equipment for training, physical infrastructure improvement and collaborative links through staff and student exchange programmes. Current partners who have been supporting these functions of the university include the World Bank through the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, the Swedish Government through Sida support, and the Royal Government of Norway through the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Other funding agencies include the Australian Aid Agency for Development Cooperation (AusAID) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the European Commission under its various framework programmes.

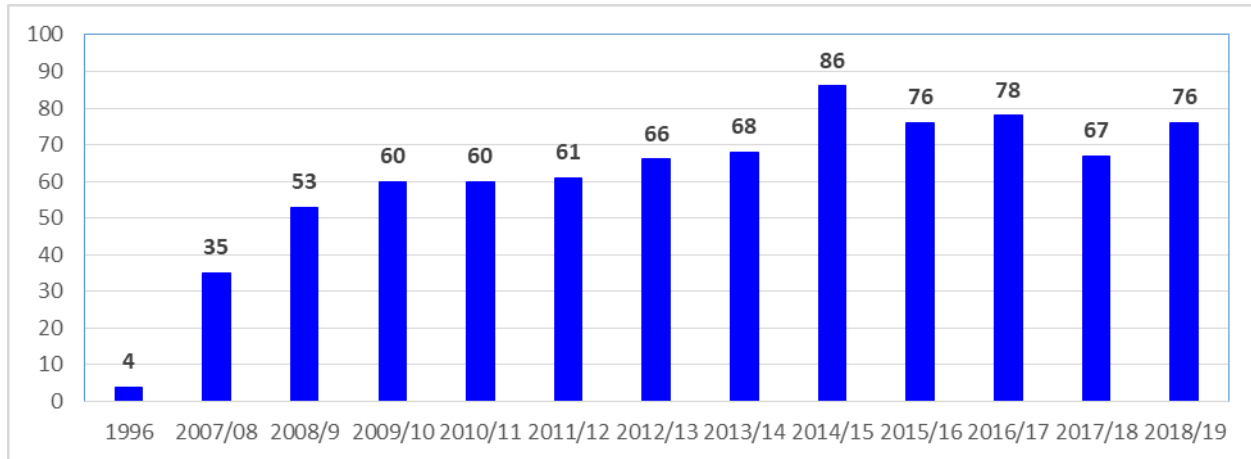
#### Training of staff and diversification of programmes

In analysing the growth of the Ardhi University, it is essential to look back to 1996 when the then Ardhi Institute was affiliated with the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). The Institute changed its status and became a constituent college of the University of Dar es Salaam to nurture the College to grow into a full-fledged university. During the time of affiliation, Ardhi Institute had only six (6) Academic Departments and one Institute providing higher education at the Advanced Diploma Level in Land and Human Settlement Development and Environmental Management. By transforming the Institute into a Constituent College of the University of Dar es Salaam, the academic programmes were re-structured, and other new programmes were developed. For example, while in 1996 there were only six (6) programmes offering Advance Diploma Certificates, by 2007/08 the number of academic programmes had increased to 44. These were categorised into Bachelors, Postgraduate Diploma, Masters and PhD Programmes. When Ardhi became a College of the University of Dar es Salaam, it embarked on training her academic staff to

PhD levels as one of the requirements for university accreditation\*. The training of PhDs was primarily and is still being undertaken at various universities outside Tanzania. At the same time, a small number are trained at local universities, especially the University of Dar es Salaam. The University College of Lands and Architectural Studies (UCLAS) registered significant achievements during the ten (10) year period of its existence.

#### Increased number of Staff with PhD qualifications

Through the capacity-building programme, the number of academic staff with PhD qualifications at ARU increased from four (4) in 1996 to 60 (Facts & Figures 2009/10) by 2009. The number of PhDs has continued to grow and reached 86 in 2014/15. However, this figure dropped in 2014/15 and 2015/16 from 86 to 76 because of the transfer of some staff from ARU to the Central Government (Figure 2).



**Fig. 2.** Trend of increase in the number of Staff with PhDs (1996–2018/19)

#### Increased number of academic programmes

Ardhi University is the only training institution offering land-based disciplines at the degree level in Tanzania. The aim of transforming the programmes was to widen the scope of knowledge and professionalism consistent with state-of-the-art in technological advancement both locally and internationally. The capacity built through advanced training (PhD training) has contributed towards establishing new programmes, including transforming traditional ones. By 1996 when Ardhi Institute was affiliated with the University of Dar es Salaam, there were only six (6) academic programmes. These programmes increased to 44 in 2007 when Ardhi University was established and 50 in 2014/15. Some programmes were later de-established, resulting in a reduced number to 40 in 2018/19 (Table 1). The programmes offered at ARU include diploma, undergraduate, postgraduate diploma, master and doctoral programmes. The general trend shows an increase even though some programmes (for example, Postgraduate Diploma programmes designed as transitional requirements for an applicant to qualify for Master's Programmes) were phased out.

**Table 1.** Trend in an increase in the number of programmes

Programmes	1996	2007/08	2014/15	2018/19
Undergraduate	6	21	24	20
Postgraduate Diploma	-	7	7	0
Masters Programme	-	10	13	13
PhD Programme	-	6	6	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>40</b>

Source: ARU Facts and Figures (2019)

\* The recommended minimum number of staff with PhD qualification as per Tanzania Commission for Universities Guidelines (TCU, 2014) for establishing a new University is 5. However, for Ardhi University that had two Faculties and 6 Departments required approximately 20 staff with PhD qualifications by 2007.

### Increased enrolment of students

The built capacity has contributed significantly to an expanded enrolment of students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This has been observed by a steady increase in the number of students between 2007 and 2019. Taking a student enrolment of 1448 for the base year 2007/08, the total enrolment for the academic year 2018/19 of 4,122 represents an increase of 185 percent (Table 2). Although several factors come into play for this increase, academic staff training has had a share in the growth, especially for postgraduate students. Instructors with PhD qualifications play a key role in teaching and supervising research projects for postgraduate students.

**Table 2.** Increase in student enrolment (2007–2019)

Year	Undergraduate students	Postgraduate students	Total enrolment	Percentage increase
2007/08	1324	124	1448	0
2008/09	1503	170	1673	16
2009/10	1996	120	2116	46
2010/11	2651	139	2790	93
2011/12	3195	191	3386	134
2012/13	3549	203	3752	159
2013/14	3667	189	3856	166
2014/15	3700	288	3988	175
2015/16	3771	336	4107	184
2016/17	3898	270	4168	188
2017/18	3993	237	4230	192
2018/19	3868	254	4122	185

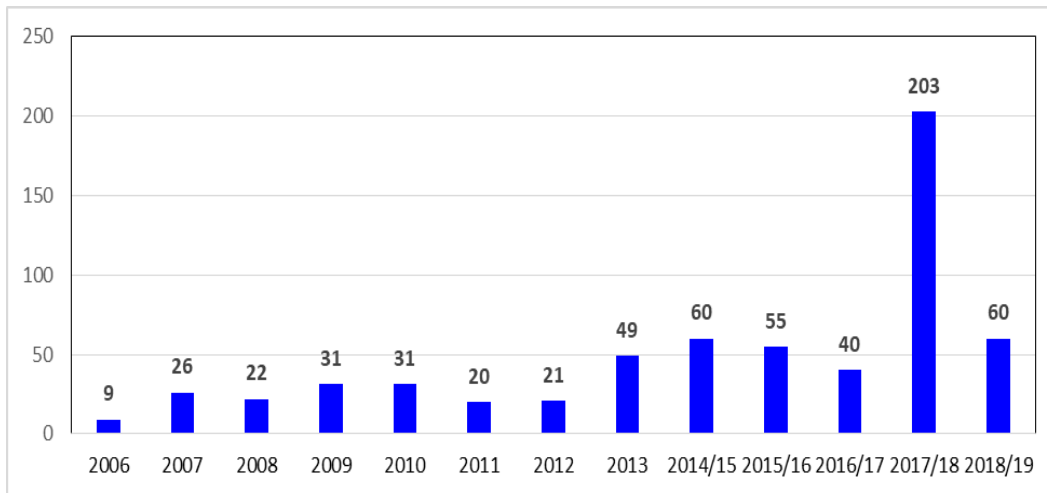
Source: Facts and Figures Reports (2007/8 and 2018/19)

### Increase in the number of publications

Concurrent with the increased number of programmes and students, improved capacity has contributed to increased publications. Scholarly publications in the form of published dissertations, journal articles, books, book chapters and workshop and conference proceedings are key attributes that contribute to increased university visibility. For example, while in 2006, the total number of publications was only nine (9), the total number increased to 203 in 2017/18 (Figure 3). Although the trend fluctuates, the general pattern indicates growth and an increase. The increasing number of publications has promoted the university on the world map of universities and, to some extent, opened up opportunities for expanded collaboration with peer institutions. Increased publications have also resulted in an increased number of senior academicians who have been promoted to higher ranks serving as Senior Lecturers or Professors.

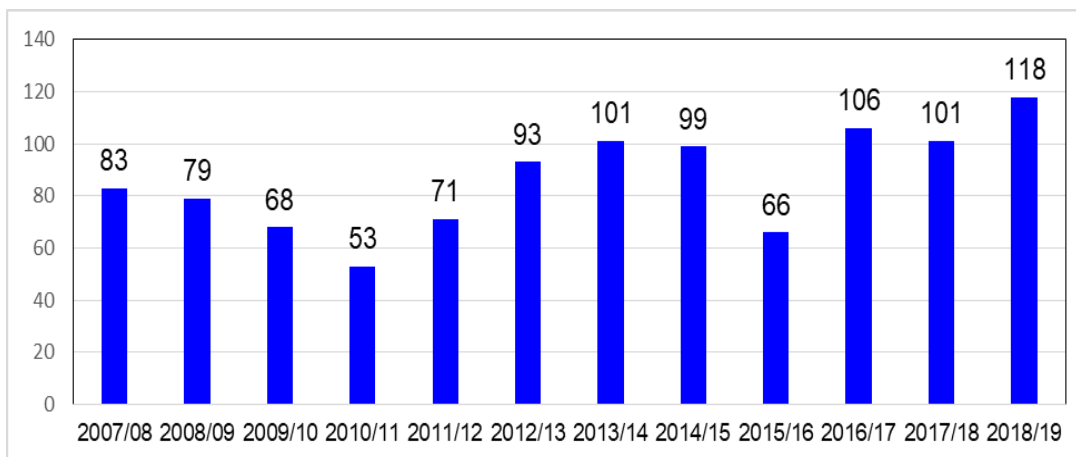
### Increased number of research projects

Improved capacity has culminated in improved research culture and an increased number of research and public service projects. More staff who have graduated with PhD qualifications are increasingly winning fundable research projects with corresponding outputs in an increase in the number of publications. Although there was a downfall in the number of projects in the years between 2008/09 and 2010/11, there was an upsurge from 2011/12 to 2013/14, increasing from 71 to 101 projects and from 101 projects in 2017/18 to 118 projects in 2018/19 (Figure 4).



**Fig. 3.** Number of publications (2006–2018/19)

Source: ARU Web page ([www.aru.ac.tz](http://www.aru.ac.tz); accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2021 and Fact and Figures 2018/19)

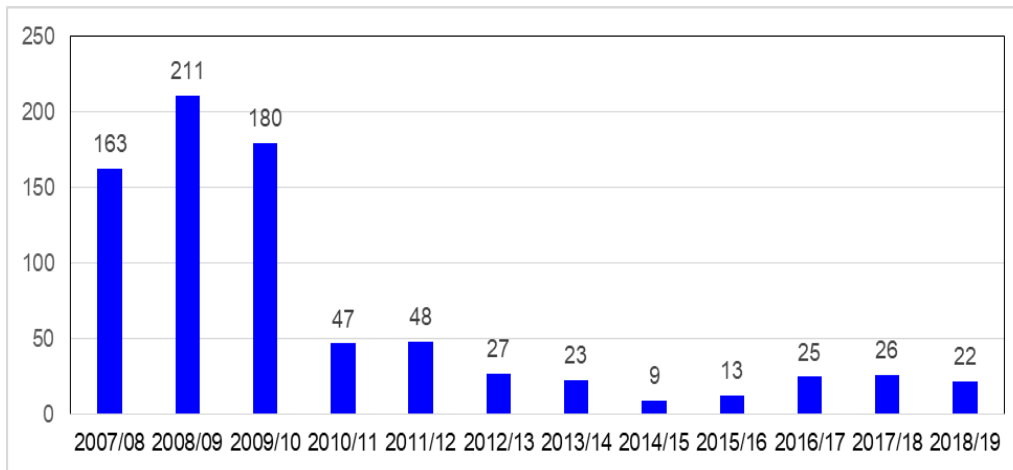


**Fig. 4.** Trend in number of research projects (2007/08–2018/19)

#### **Consultancy/public service projects**

Public services constitute one of the core functions of Ardhi University. Apart from contributing revenue to the university, it has been deployed as a window that links the University's functions and the industry. Although the number of projects has shown a decreasing trend (Figure 5), the contribution of ARU to strategic projects of national importance has remained the same. ARU has contributed to surveying and laying down of the gas pipeline from Somanga to Dar es Salaam, design and supervision of the construction of the University of Dodoma, Environmental Impact Assessment of major projects in Tanzania, Flood mitigation plans in Kilosa town, Feasibility studies for Dar es Salaam Rapid Bus Transport (BRT) project, Surveying and valuation of the standard gauge railway, the East African Crude Oil Gas Pipeline (EACOP) project, valuation of properties for both investment and compensation purposes, monitoring of sea waves for climate change mitigation and adaptation in Tanga and review of the Dodoma National Capital City Master Plan (2019–2039).





**Fig. 5.** Trend in number of public service projects (2007/08–2018/19)

### International links and students

Ardhi University has collaborated with national and international institutions in teaching, research and public service delivery. While in 2009, there were 26 national and international links, in the year 2018/19, the number of links had increased to 49. As a result of capacity-building, ARU has continued to attract international students despite having fewer numbers in various postgraduate and undergraduate programmes. The trend shows that there were eight (8) students in 2014/15, and in the year 2018/19 the number of students who were registered in postgraduate programmes increased to 31. For collaborative or joint programmes, students come from all over the world. From a regional perspective, ARU attracts students from Swaziland, Malawi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Gambia and Uganda. The university has also collaborated with national and international universities (in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, the Philippines, Chile, Ghana and Finland) in conducting multidisciplinary research and running joint education programmes and research projects.

### 4. Discussion

It is imperative from the results that capacity-building has significantly contributed to ARU's growth as an academic institution to cope with the demands and challenges of higher education in the 21st century. Recapitulating Morgan's (2006) argument on *empowerment and identity*, institutions' capacity-building ought to lead *organisations* or systems to survive, grow, diversify and become more complex. This is apparent from the results presented that ARU has survived as an entity of higher learning institutions for a long time. Besides, it has grown from a constituent college of the University of Dar es Salaam in 1996 to a full-fledged university in 2007. ARU has diversified its programme from traditional land-based to new academic disciplines, including economics, business studies, community development, civil engineering, banking and financing, public policy, programme management, information system management, climate change and disaster risk management. Apart from contributing to increased student enrolment, programme diversification has opened up new areas for ARU to further contribute to national development.

Prior to embarking on capacity-building initiatives in the late 1990s, ARU's contribution to societal development was largely inclined towards addressing practical problems with a lesser focus on generating knowledge through research and dissemination. It is worth noting that capacity-building undertaken at ARU with support from development partners has culminated in improved research culture depicted by the increase in research projects and publications. This impact is also reflected in the improved capacity of researchers to formulate fundable proposals. Although a change in culture and attitude cannot be explicitly measured and takes a bit longer, the foregoing observations provide a generalised picture of attitudinal change towards knowledge creation. This tallies well with Morgan's argument on the dynamics of a complex combination of attitudes, resources, and strategies during the capacity-building process.

One of the objectives of universities is to position themselves on the international map of academia by establishing links and attracting international students. This objective can only be achieved if such entities have developed adequate capacity to reach such levels of academic excellence to gain recognition and associate with peers. As a result of capacity building, ARU has transformed itself and developed links with national and international peers. This has been facilitated by establishing collaborative training programmes that have attracted international students worldwide. Through capacity-building, it has also been possible to forge collaborative links with other national and international universities. This is a reflection of several authors who believe that capacity is the reflection of individuals, organisations and societies to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives (Morgan, 2006; Baser, Morgan, 2008; Gomez, 2009; UNDP, 2008).

The ARU has assumed an increasing role in developing innovative approaches to addressing community and environmental problems on innovation and technological frontiers. Through capacity-building and community-driven research projects, ARU has developed a method of purifying water using local plants that rural communities can quickly adapt. Similarly, another research project has developed an innovative approach to using herbal plants to extract heavy metals from polluted soils, mainly in mining areas. All these projects have contributed to an improved public life by using locally available resources (Morgan, 2006).

Traditionally, ARU has endeavoured to contribute to public life through teaching, public service and research undertakings. Examples of critical areas where ARU has played a key role include; the production of skilled human resources in the disciplines of land, human settlements development and environmental management sectors. ARU has undertaken surveying, land value assessment for compensation of the gas pipeline project from Mtwara to Dar es Salaam, efficient liquid waste management for ARU and communities in Dar es Salaam, development of various policies and guidelines for land development-related sectors and proposal for reducing traffic congestion in Dar es Salaam. ARU has also participated in preparing the State of the Cities Report (2013) that has been used for benchmarking, comparing cities' performance and formulating development strategies for increased competitiveness and inclusion in cities. The Government has engaged staff members from ARU to design and supervise the construction of buildings. A good example is building Regional Courts constructed countrywide using locally available building materials. In so doing, the University has forged a good relationship with the Government and the industry through public service and community outreach projects.

## **5. Conclusion**

This paper has empirically shown that capacity-building has immensely contributed to ARU's growth, diversification and contribution as an academic institution to the national development agenda. This has manifested in the form of increased student enrolment and staff with PhD qualifications, an expanded number of training programmes, research and publications, national and international links, and innovative research projects that contributed to improved public life. While these achievements have been partly facilitated by financial support from development partners, the Government played a key role in providing a conducive environment and financial support for programmes to materialise. Notable impacts emerging from these initiatives include the increased contribution of ARU in various national projects and programmes, increased national and international links and innovative approaches to addressing local community problems. For ARU to continue playing the key roles and survive as a viable national and international academic institution, the developed capacity has to be sustained and developed further through staff succession and increased financial and technical support to conduct research and disseminate research findings through community outreach.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to ARU and the stakeholders for their support.

## **7. Declaration of Competing Interest**

The manuscript's authors declare that there is no interest in conflict, and all reference materials were dully acknowledged.

## 8. Funding

None.

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