Guest Editor's Introduction

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This volume of the journal is divided into two issues. The first issue (No. 1) contains qualitative articles in the Humanities. The second issue (No. 2) comprises quantitative articles in the Sciences. While many themes in the volume concern various aspects that are crucial for Africa's future development, two of them stand out more prominently to me. I discuss these themes one at a time in the ensuing paragraphs for the sake of perspicuity.

The first theme is about building an inclusive artificial intelligence (AI) future for Africa. With AI transforming the globe, Africa faces a major hurdle: i.e. the risk of deepening existing inequalities or implementing these innovations for development. A number of articles highlight the fact that Africa's ability to benefit from AI is dependent on the strength of its public infrastructure, identity systems, governance, and institutional trust.

For instance, the Nigerian Digital Agriculture Strategy (NDAS) illustrates how digital platforms can be a powerful tool for transforming sectors like agriculture. It is well understood that digital identity (DigiID) is essential for AI-driven services like financial inclusion. Nonetheless, Nigeria's experience shows how poor design, centralization, and weak regulation can lead to exclusion rather than empowerment.

In the final analysis, Africa's digital future requires more than the adoption of global technologies. It is imperative to rethink how these technologies are deployed for equitable development. This presents both a major opportunity and a significant challenge for Africa.

To ensure that AI is a tool for empowerment, not marginalization, Africa must have transparent governance, trustworthy digital identity systems, interoperable public infrastructure, and sustained investment. An imported AI model that is not structured specifically for the African landscape will be disastrous.

The adoption of global technologies is one thing and the deployment of these technologies for equitable development is another. To appropriately address existing disparities, the continent must strategically implement these technologies. Africa should examine, define, and adopt an approach that is rooted in ethics and equity.

The second theme has to do with reframing higher education apropos the rise of the commercialization of African universities. For example, using case studies and Pierre Bourdieu's Symbolic Capital Theory, a study highlights how universities are shifting toward business-oriented models. The new education model is focused on industry alignment. As such, its priority is income generation and student recruitment. Specifically focusing on Botswana and South Africa, it is demonstrated how the increasing commodification and marketization of higher education are transforming academic institutions across Africa.

The traditional purpose of universities focuses on critical inquiry, knowledge creation, and public service. It is underscored that a widening gap between the current commercial

institutions and the traditional centered institutions exists. This change in the educational system not only threatens the quality and accessibility of higher education, but it also poses a problem for academic freedom. With this commercialization in academia, faculty members are forced to focus less on academic integrity and more on recruitment, customer service, and performance targets. Against this backdrop, it is advocated that policy reform and a renewed commitment to the traditional mission of higher education be done. The major lesson here is that African leaders must prioritize inclusive, justice-oriented academic systems and to disregard the profit-driven models.