

Media Monitoring: Extract of Press News on Higher Education in Africa

1. University World News

Grants to help address knowledge gaps in agriculture (RUFORUM/World Bank)

Major universities from six African countries will next year stand a chance to develop regional hubs for agricultural learning with the help of grants worth US\$20 million from the World Bank via the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM). The beneficiaries will be selected by the World Bank after a call for proposals is released in September. They will be in Cameroon, Mozambique, Malawi, Ghana, Kenya and the Ivory Coast. The chosen universities will be expected to use the money to address key knowledge gaps in Africa's agricultural sector, including dealing with climate change, building professional agri-business production and distribution chains, data management and mitigating post-harvest losses. The awards will be one of the biggest grants given to universities through RUFORUM, established by 10 African vice-chancellors in 2004, and now comprising 85 African universities from 36 countries, which is supported by the World Bank and other donors. "The idea is for the universities to model themselves as anchors for the region in order to cause transformation and have a wider impact. That is why the grant is being given to institutions rather than individual researchers," said Dr Paul Nampala, grants manager at the Kampala-based RUFORUM secretariat. These awards build on RUFORUM's existing funding procedures through which it has been supporting the training of scientists and innovative agricultural research programmes by giving grants to faculty members in its network. The money is often sourced from charitable foundations and governments. "The aim of the grants is to develop interventions that impact rural development, and universities, if supported, can do impactful research," said Nampala. Studies show that for agriculture in Africa to grow rapidly and contribute to transformation and development, enhanced capacity in research and development is crucial, he noted. RUFORUM's current grants are segmented and often range from US\$4,000 given to undergraduate students to conduct focused field work (usually under the guidance of a PhD student or a professor), and up to US\$350,000 given directly to projects run by senior professors. These projects usually run from anywhere between one to three years. "In order for a proposal to win, there must be evidence of working as a team. It should also demonstrate a clear engagement with communities," said Nampala. Nampala said although universities are designed to teach, research and outreach, teaching often attracts the bulk of resources and finance because of African governments' education investing priorities. RUFORUM grants are designed to fill such gaps. Dr Drake Mirembe, a lecturer in the College of Computing and Information Sciences at Makerere University, Uganda, says knowledge-generating institutions such as universities should not be disassociated from industries within their home countries. "Farming communities need to work with researchers who generate knowledge and institutions that generate the knowledge need to understand the farmers," said Mirembe.

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2. University World News

[eLearning Africa – Where opportunity meets innovation \(Africa\)](#)

Some of the biggest names in global education and technology will be attending the upcoming eLearning Africa conference – the largest in Africa on learning, training and technology – to be held in Kigali, Rwanda, later this month. Among those attending the event to be held in the Kigali Convention Centre from 26-28 September are Professor Nii Narku Quaynor, who established some of Africa’s first internet connections; Dr Martin Dougiamas, the founder of the open-source learning platform, Moodle; Elliott Masie, founder of the Masie Center and chair of the Learning Consortium; Dr Bitange Ndemo of the University of Nairobi, Kenya; and Dr Mamphela Ramphele, an academic, anti-apartheid campaigner and entrepreneur from South Africa. They will be among hundreds of experts, converging under the main conference theme of “Uniting Africa” and looking at how technology can break down barriers, enabling Africans to share knowledge, learn and prepare for the future together. According to conference organiser Rebecca Stromeyer, the fourth industrial revolution presents a big opportunity for Africa to leapfrog its competitors. “We are in a period of major change,” said Stromeyer. “Africa has the advantage of the youngest population on earth. It is full of opportunity and promise. However, in order to seize the opportunity, Africans must come together and ensure that the whole continent is fit for the future. That means sharing knowledge and experience, breaking down barriers to communication, opening up access, supporting diversity and giving all Africans a chance to learn and acquire the skills they need to succeed.” She said the upcoming edition of eLearning Africa will provide a platform to some of the best known authorities on eLearning, along with some of the EdTech industry’s most successful entrepreneurs. They’ll be joined by analysts, technologists, administrators, political decision-makers and investors. “eLearning Africa really is a place where experience meets opportunity and innovation,” she said.

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3. VC Daily

[Kenya uses video conferencing in higher education to meet the demand for Learning \(Kenya\)](#)

Kenya’s education system is facing the right kind of problem. One of the youngest and fastest growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, it’s experiencing a boom in demand for higher education and needs to modernize. As it stands, there aren’t enough teaching resources to cope with large numbers of young university applicants. In a way, it’s a good problem, one that stems from encouraging socio-economic development and a diversifying economy. And it seems Kenya’s educators are taking the right approach to solving it. They are embracing new methods of teaching, new ways of improving teaching standards, and new ways of tailoring courses to the needs of the economy. Video conferencing in higher education has become one of the key technologies for delivering those improvements, and it could help meet the demand for world-class education. According to an October 2017 report from the World Bank, enrollment in Sub-Saharan higher education courses is growing at a rate near double that of the world average. The region is building on a relatively low base beginning in the 1970s, so the raw numbers aren’t nearly as large as North America or Europe, but the trend is clearly positive. Educartis, an online education platform that operates across Africa, has said the spike in university demand over recent decades has been caused by globalization and a government focus on higher education as a driver of socio-economic growth. It has argued that investment in new technologies like online learning and personalized course structures is needed to meet the demand.

That's a message reflected in the initiatives of Mount Kenya University, a private institution promoting the use of video conferencing and virtual classrooms. The school's leaders have said virtual learning is the most viable method for meeting the nation's educational and economic needs.

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4. Nature News

[World Bank pours hundreds of millions into African science \(Africa\)](#)

A World Bank scheme aimed at building grassroots research capacity in Africa will nearly double its budget with a third, and probably final, investment worth at least US\$280 million. The initiative, which loans money to African governments, has set up 46 education and research centres in 17 African countries, created jobs for hundreds of scientists and trained thousands of students — but both critics and supporters of the programme worry what will happen once the bank's money runs out. “I see a big challenge when the funding ends,” says Patrick Ogwang, who leads a traditional-medicine research centre funded by the initiative, at Mbarara University in Uganda. He is eyeing industry partnerships as a source of future cash, but says that competition for research money in the country is fierce. The World Bank launched the African Centres of Excellence (ACE) initiative in 2014 with \$165 million in loans. The money was used to create 22 centres in west and central African nations including Nigeria, Benin and Togo; these were competitively chosen in partnership with the governments taking on the loans (see ‘Excellence in Africa’). Governments that receive the loans give out five-year grants that allow centres, which are linked to established universities, to invest in infrastructure, staff and financial support for students. They all focus on local research challenges such as maternal health, plant breeding, sanitation and infectious diseases. The West and central African centres have enrolled about 6,500 masters and 1,600 PhD students so far, and the East and southern centres another 1,800 together. In the long run, centres are expected to sustain themselves financially, drawing on funding from governments, philanthropic organizations and industry. It's important that the centres move towards sustainability, says Andreas Blom, the World Bank economist who has led the programme since its inception. Blom says the third round of loans will offer “weaning off” funding for existing centres in West and central Africa, as well as paying for new ones. But, he adds, it will probably be the scheme's last investment.

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5. My Science Work

[Studying Abroad: A Choice or an Obligation \(Cameroon\)](#)

Dr. Larissa Kojoué, PhD in Political Science, defied the odds and pursued her doctoral degree as an African woman. After being forced to move to France to receive the training she desired, she wrote a book, you will be a doctor, my child, with her colleagues to inspire her peers to follow their academic goals of higher education, to prove to them that this degree is not just for the elite. “Doctor Larissa,” an expression that continues to take some people by surprise. In Cameroon, a doctoral degree is not only a diploma, but also a grail that represents the prestigious, “elite” people. Access to doctoral programs requires an unwavering commitment to the goal paired with a particularly fruitful creativity. Earning a doctorate is truly a challenging obstacle course. Larissa Kojoué, Cameroonian Doctor in Political Science, tells us what it's like to pursue a doctorate in Cameroon and discusses her recently published book “You will be a Doctor my Child”, released earlier last year by L’Harmattan, which brings

together crossed testimonies from other PhD students in Africa. Scholarships do not exist, or rather, are so rare that to the average person, it's impossible to get one: they're reserved for particular people. The funding available comes from international cooperation, mostly in the context of projects sponsored by foreign researchers. The funding typically lasts only few months and rarely covers the time required to complete a thesis, especially in the humanities or social sciences. Those who decide to do a doctoral thesis do so, in general, without funding, without a follow-up, without a real deadline, without effective supervision, and especially without any other means except the strong will to achieve it. According to a recent report published by the African Union of Educational Outlooks, Africa produces less than 2% of the world's research (UNESCO, 2010). PhD and master's programs are among the weakest in Africa. Because of the strong demand for higher education programs, university staff, particularly in French-speaking countries, are often poorly qualified to provide high-quality training. These shortcomings are reinforced by the lack of minimum means for conducting research and thereby the opportunity to participate in the global knowledge economy. To be a professional in higher education, a PhD is required, and it is a determining factor in improving the quality of education systems in Africa. However, the majority of university teachers are research assistants and assistant teachers. In most cases, these are PhD candidates. Reconciling a full-time teaching position (sometimes more than 300 hours per year) while conducting research (doctoral and postdoctoral) is a big challenge. Abandonment cases are extremely frequent (especially among women) due to the lack of retention policies. An easy way to deal with this lack of resources is consultancy with development organizations. Nevertheless, consultancies monopolize time and harden the way for internationally recognised research standards (De Sardan, 2011).

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6. Daily Monitor

Makerere in Shs18b revenue drop as student numbers fall (Uganda)

Makerere University revenue has dropped by Shs18b following a decline in student enrolment occasioned by a council decision that was reached about 10 years ago. In his July letter to the School of Law principal, Dr Christopher Mbazira, the vice chancellor, Prof Barnabas Nawangwe, says the fall in revenue has constrained the university's activities but doesn't specify which areas have been affected. "Makerere University's non tax revenue has fallen by Shs18b over the last three years. The fall in revenue is largely due to the decrease in enrolment occasioned by a council decision in 2006 to reduce enrolment by 10 per cent each year due to lack of facilities, especially in teaching space. The fall in revenue has seriously constrained university activities," Prof Nawangwe said. Documents that this newspaper has seen indicate that the country's oldest institution has seen its revenue, mainly collected from students in form of tuition, drop from Shs99.1b in 2015 to Shs89.3b in 2017. In 2016, the officials were only able to raise Shs94.9b. Prof. Nawangwe has not been available for a comment for the last one month as he is often engaged in meetings, according to his office secretaries, and has not returned our repeated calls or replied our text messages requesting for an interview. But sources close to management, who preferred anonymity to speak freely, said the figure was exaggerated and estimated that the revenue has reduced by about Shs9b. The sources admit that there has been a decline in student enrolment but are quick to add that the numbers have increased in the 2018/19 academic year, with more than 10,000 already registered for first year out of the 22,000 that were admitted.

“We are exhausted. We have debts. The students’ numbers are declining but we are managing,” the source said. Prof. Nawangwe had written to Dr Mbazira requesting that they double their intake to allow more students study after government increased the university’s teaching space by 40 per cent. Click this [Link](#) for more details

7. The standard Digital

[Why Kenyan universities should be the drivers of Uhuru’s Big Four agenda \(Kenya\)](#)

The higher education fraternity has undergone tremendous transformation. Key among them is the enactment of Universities Act No. 42 of 2012, which commenced on December 12, 2012. This brought the establishment, governance and administration of universities under the same legal framework. This caused the repealing of Acts of Parliament for seven universities that operated under individual Acts. The new law also caused some public university constituent colleges operating under Legal Orders to be upgraded to fully-fledged public universities. Initially, public universities were established through individual Acts of Parliament. Today, we have 71 universities and colleges, including those with interim letters. The universities’ mandates are teaching and learning, research and community outreach. However, all universities expend so much energy on the teaching and learning aspects, other mandates have been pushed to the periphery. It is time that our universities outgrow this traditional way of doing things. President Uhuru Kenyatta’s dream of transforming Kenya rides on the Big Four agenda, namely, Universal Healthcare, Manufacturing, Affordable Housing and Food Security. This will only come true with concerted action aimed at eliminating the numerous barriers on the path of execution. We need to involve all stakeholders and in particular our Universities to help in achievement of this agenda. If you live in Kenya — or reading about Kenya — you’ve probably heard about the ‘Big Four’ agenda. The government has allocated Sh400 billion to the Big Four agenda, which is the main focus of President Kenyatta in his final term in office. The universal health coverage has been allocated Sh44.6 billion while Sh6.5 billion will go towards affordable housing for all Kenyans. Sh20.25 billion has been allocated to enhance food and nutrition security for all by 2022, and Sh2.4 billion to support value addition and raise the manufacturing sector’s share to gross domestic product to 15 per cent by 2022. On food security, Uhuru wants to produce 2.76 million bags of maize by the end of this year alone. On healthcare, he is looking at increasing the number of people with health cover from 16 million to 25 million. On housing, the plan is to have at least 500,000 affordable homes in all major cities by 2022. This is just a sample of what is happening under each pillar. However, the reality is that under each area there are other secondary benefits. For example, while targeting to build the 500,000 housing units, 350,000 people will get jobs. In improving the cotton industry, 500,000 jobs will be created directly, and at least another 100,000 in clothing manufacturing. Under agro-processing 1,000 SMEs will be established and at least 200,000 jobs created.

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8. Notes from the House

[High Spending On Education Grants, Yet Delivery Still Well Below Target \(South Africa\)](#)

Despite high levels of spending of the government’s Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG), dangerous pit latrines, crumbling mud classrooms and shortages of desks, chairs and other resources remain commonplace throughout much of the education sector. This prompted the parliamentary Appropriations Committee to ask if the education sector should be left with the task of struggling to

improve its infrastructure, or whether this should actually be the responsibility of the Department of Public Works. "Based on the submissions made to the Committee, the education sector seems to be struggling with handling the additional infrastructure responsibility, which is the core mandate of Public Works departments, and this may have a negative impact on the core mandate of the DBE [Department of Basic Education]," a Committee report concluded. Reports tabled in Parliament by the National Council of Province's Select Committee on Appropriations, which separately considered the total expenditure of both the Early Childhood Development Grant (ECDG) and the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG), made it clear that while many provinces are spending 90 to 100% of these grants - and even overspending in some cases - delivery continues to fall far short. Part of the Committee's mandate in its ongoing interaction with government departments is to monitor spending patterns on conditional grant allocations. The Committee recommended in its reports on both these grants that the answer was to be found in improved cooperation between the provincial government departments and the national Departments of Education and Public Works. While spending of the grants is good in most of the relevant provincial government departments, delivery still falls way behind. One of the main problems facing ECD centres turned out to be largely infrastructure-related, prompting the Committee to encourage provincial government departments of social services to work closely with the Department of Basic Education's Accelerated School Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) Programme and with the Public Works Department. The shared obstacles in the successful implementation of both the ECDG and the EIG were summed up in the Committee's separate reports, which were tabled in Parliament late in August. They highlighted challenges in finding suitably skilled managers and engineers to oversee maintenance projects; procurement mismanagement and lack of capacity in provincial supply chain processes; disproportionately high quotes from service providers, especially in far-flung rural areas where vast distances push up travel and other costs; and labour instability along with community unrest.

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