

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

1. University World News

[Agricultural higher education project calls for proposals \(Africa/RUFORUM\)](#)

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) in collaboration with the governments of Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malawi and Mozambique and the World Bank have launched a call for proposals for a multimillion dollar higher education agriculture project intended to boost human resource capacity for the transformation of agriculture. The Strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa (SHAEA) initiative, which kicks off in June 2019, aims to grow a pool of “competent and relevant” human resources to accelerate agri-food systems transformation. The project seeks to fill critical identified gaps in terms of knowledge and skills necessary for revitalising agriculture in the region, including in the fields of agribusiness and entrepreneurship, agri-food systems and nutrition, rural innovation and extension, risk management and climate change data, and policy analysis and management. Universities from the six African countries which meet the eligibility criteria and are interested in becoming a Regional Anchor University (RAU) are invited to submit applications in partnership with tertiary education institutions, including post-secondary agricultural vocational institutions and key agricultural sector actors, both public and private. RAUs will be picked through a competitive selection process and will provide agriculture and food related education and training, blended with cross-disciplinary approaches, including “experiential learning” and applied research. The project will also try to foster university linkages with the agricultural sector at regional and national levels, and forge university partnerships with private and public entities in the agriculture sector, both within and outside Africa. “The proposed SHAEA project will support the governments of the participating countries to collectively address challenges in these regional key gap areas, with interventions that include helping selected universities establish a strong culture of collaboration and partnership between higher education institutions, and other tertiary education institutions, with the agriculture sector”, according to an earlier statement. The selected RAUs will become regional hubs for innovation and training and are expected to instigate “real” development impact; and help develop a culture of results-orientation and accountability in institutional management, through a “results-based financing mechanism,” it added. An independent evaluation committee and the steering committee will be constituted to select universities that will act as RAUs. The project will be governed by a regional steering committee that will include representatives of governments from participating countries, and will be managed by a regional facilitation unit based at RUFORUM headquarters in Kampala, Uganda.

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2. University World News

[Higher education's key role in sustainable development \(Global\)](#)

The United Nations defines sustainable development as “...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. As such, sustainable development not only deals with environmental issues, but economic, social and cultural issues as well. Given the increased demands placed on societies and the environment due to, among other factors, increased human migration, increased urbanisation and industrialisation as well as the

ongoing depletion of non-renewable resources, it is clear that global action is needed to create a more sustainable future. Given its primary role as knowledge producer, higher education can serve as a powerful means to help create a more sustainable future. Thus, the concept of 'education for sustainable development' has become, in recent years, one of the core educational initiatives to help address many of the problems associated with human development. Indeed, higher education's role in creating a sustainable future will presumably take on a greater importance as the world continues to become increasingly globalised and interdependent. According to UNESCO, education for sustainable development "empowers people to change the way they think and work towards a sustainable future". It therefore involves making access to good-quality education available at every stage of life. More specifically, it involves educating students on the necessity of sustainable development by integrating sustainable development issues into all aspects of teaching, research and service. This means reorienting the education system at all levels to help people think and behave in ways that foster a more sustainable planet (for example, global citizenship, recycling, climate change, biodiversity, renewable energy and social responsibility). In practice, it means equipping students with the requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to create a sustainable future. To that end, students should cultivate critical and creative thinking skills, engage in authentic interdisciplinary learning activities and develop a value system that emphasises responsibility to self, others and the planet. Thus, education for sustainable development and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) go hand in hand. Indeed, an increasing number of universities are offering degree and certificate programmes in sustainable development.

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3. University World News

Government promotes TVET sector as 'preferable' option (Kenya)

Kenya has kicked off a series of reforms to drive up the growth of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, to hit an enrolment target of 3.1 million over the next five years. This will place the institutions under a new tighter regulatory regime to boost the quality of learning and increase access to post-school education. "We want to make TVET the preferable and rewarding choice for Kenyans and revitalise the competences of our national workforce to build a competitive economy," said Kenya's Education Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohamed. According to Mohamed the government intends to adopt a National Credit Accumulation and Transfer System that will facilitate movement of students across various certification levels, including TVET colleges and universities. It will harmonise admission requirements, duration of study and learning descriptors of programmes at certificate, diploma and university levels. "This will institutionalise a common process for evaluation and issuance of qualifications in Kenya. We want to put in place a coherent, credible and well-coordinated 21st century framework that will bring down the iron curtains we currently have at different levels of our education system," she said. "The aim is to eliminate devaluation of credits and certifications based on fragmentation and uncontrolled systems which cause a disconnect between qualifications and the demands of the market. Unregulated systems are increasing the prevalence of fraudulent and fake certification and clouding the capacity to collect complete and cohesive evidence on the country's skills landscape. Such systems are also exposing us to doubt by our international partners," said Mohamed. As part of the reforms, the government announced it has further reduced the annual cost of technical training from US\$920 to US\$564 per student. Under this arrangement,

the National Treasury will provide capitation worth US\$300 per trainee per annum, while the Higher Education Loans Board will supplement training costs to a maximum of US\$400 per trainee, annually. For this financial year which started last month, the National Treasury has allocated US\$160 million for technical institutions. The funding, which is over 30% higher than the past year, is expected to aid the recruitment of an additional 2,000 technical training instructors and capitation grants for students. The government has kicked off talks with the private sector to provide internship and employment opportunities to trainees through a structured mechanism for micro, small and medium enterprises. “Emerging needs are forcing a rewrite of the compact code between corporation, citizen and government. We are exploring ways of machine-sharing between the informal sector and our national polytechnics,” said Mohamed.

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4. University World News

[Calls for more investment in geospatial education \(Africa\)](#)

Geospatial technologies and space science have an indispensable role to play in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through the measurement and management of resources, but most African universities lack the capacity for increased earth observation activities, a recent conference has heard. Speaking at the second international conference of the centre held in Nairobi last month, Emmanuel Nkurunziza, director-general of the Kenyan Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), said increased training in various areas of earth observation was needed. The conference, with a focus on sustainability, brought together over 400 delegates from RCMRD’s 20 member states such as Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. They included academics, applications and software developers, hardware manufacturers, geospatial data producers and vendors, researchers, and policy makers. Delegates were concerned that as the world embraces geospatial science in the management of its resources, Africa was lagging, both with respect to technologies and the capacity to leverage technologies. University representatives in particular were concerned that institutions were not investing sufficiently in centres for geospatial education. Universities currently offering geospatial technology courses at the conference included Uganda’s Makerere University, South Africa’s University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Zimbabwe, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Kenya’s University of Nairobi and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. “Our universities are not investing enough in developing centres of excellence to build capacity in geospatial technologies,” said Simon Onywere, director of research dissemination and uptake at Kenyatta University. Onywere, who is also an associate professor in the department of environmental planning and management at the same institution, said it was important that all university faculties and departments infuse Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in their programmes because everything is “location-related”.

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5. University World News

Higher education system under pressure as student numbers mount (Algeria)

On the eve of the academic year in Algeria this month, there are concerns about how the government can meet the expectations of free quality higher education on the part of increasing numbers of university students – this year over 1.7 million. All education, from primary to doctoral level, is free in Algeria. In addition to tuition fees, the government meets the costs of accommodation, food and transport for students in the country's 101 public universities. The system is reported to cost DZD700,000 (US\$6,000) per student each year. At an Algiers press conference at the end of July, Higher Education Minister Tahar Hadjar said costs were variable, depending on the specialties and specific needs of each region. For the year 2018, the budget allocated to the higher education sector and scientific research, is DZD313 billion (US\$2.6 billion). With the financial crisis due to the fall of the oil price, the maintenance of state subsidies to this sector has come under increased pressure, especially as the creation of private universities is still at an embryonic stage. Currently, private higher education institutions attract only 1% of students. In early August the minister of higher education and scientific research announced the opening of nine private institutions which are to accommodate 1,500 students. Although the minister has repeatedly stated that the state will not end its financial support for education at all levels, opposition parties fear a renunciation of the socialist-based principle. The Workers' Party (Parti des Travailleurs) deputy Khadidja Boudine said in a recent statement to the media that the opening of private universities will discredit public universities and attract the sector's best teachers. However, the state system is under strain. Currently there are 59,217 academics in the country, plus an additional 3,000 new academics expected to commence in September. The teacher to student ratio is 1:7 in some specialties such as medicine but 1:50 in others, the minister said. In order to accommodate students, 45,000 additional beds have been provided for the upcoming academic year. In total, over 629,000 beds are available, according to Farouk Bouklikha, director of the Office of Academic Works, speaking from Oran in late July. In addition, there are 10 new university cities – built to allow the students of each region to attend a university closer to their home – and 70,000 new teaching places.

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6. China Daily

Youth key to strengthening Africa's future (Africa)

China has devoted billions of dollars to development in almost all African countries, making it one of the continent's largest investors. Much of this investment has been in education both in Sub-Saharan Africa and at home. In fact, China has become an important destination for African students studying overseas. It comes as no surprise then that education and skills development will take center stage during this week's Investing in Africa Forum in Changsha, Hunan province. The reason is simple: nowhere is the focus on strengthening people's knowledge and skills more critical than in Sub-Saharan Africa, home to the world's youngest population. The youth are the future workforce of the region, with about 11 million young people expected to enter the labor market each year for the next decade. While there has been growth in formal wage jobs in some countries, most of these young people are likely to work in informal jobs such as household enterprises or on family-run farms, often for very low wages. But technology is rapidly changing the employment landscape, generating jobs that demand a

range of digital skills. If young Africans are to compete for high-tech, higher-paying jobs—and take advantage of increasing opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship—digital skills training must be at the core of continued education and training. To that end, the World Bank Group recently launched several initiatives designed to increase technology skills and connect young Africans to the global digital economy. XL Africa, the World Bank's business acceleration program, was launched in 2017 and has already provided startup capital to 20 of Africa's top digital entrepreneurs. The World Bank is working on a regional digital economy initiative which will help countries to build the foundation needed to realize the immense potential for digital impact in Africa. Since 2015, China has been an investor in the Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology and is poised to do more. During last year's Investing in Africa Forum, China's Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance, together with the World Bank, committed to collaborate on Technical and Vocational Education and Training, to expand vocational training opportunities. This year, they plan to take the partnership forward, by collaborating on TVET and higher education under the auspices of PASET, ensuring that as the African economies grow, so too does the earning potential of Africa's youth in sciences and technology.

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7. QUARTZ Africa

[How to build research-focused universities in Africa \(Africa\)](#)

Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 13.5% of the global population but less than 1% of global research output. In 2008, Africa produced 27 000 published papers – the same number as the Netherlands. There are some areas of improvement. A 2014 World Bank study showed that the quantity and quality of sub-Saharan Africa's research had increased substantially in the previous 20 years. It more than doubled its annual research output from 2003 to 2012. And it increased its share of global research during the same period. But Africa's overall research record remains poor. Part of the problem is that the continent contributes less than 1% of the global expenditure on research and development. African governments don't spend a significant percentage of their gross domestic product (GDP) on research. Another issue is that sub-Saharan Africa depends greatly on international collaboration and visiting academics for its research output. In 2012 southern Africa produced 79% of all its research output through international collaborations. In east Africa the number stood at 70% and in west and central Africa at 45%. This stands in stark contrast to intra-Africa collaboration which is extremely rare. Collaboration among local researchers ranges from 0.9% in west and central Africa to 2.9% in southern Africa. Limited government funding for universities lies at the root of these challenges. It is here that one of the solutions must be found. It's time for African universities, governments, and development partners to take action by fostering the development of research-active universities on the continent. The model we have developed at the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA) provides evidence that revitalisation of the African academy in Africa by Africans is possible. CARTA is a consortium of eight African universities and four African research centres. CARTA has been independently evaluated and recommended as a model that should be more widely used. Three interlinked actions are crucial to revitalise African higher education. The first is the differentiation of the continent's higher education system. Some universities must become research-intensive. Their resources must be focused on graduate training and research. Second, new funding mechanisms must

be created for these research-intensive universities. Finally, new accountability systems must be put in place to ensure high standards. There must also be room for new institutions to enter the system. One particularly compelling reason to differentiate research-intensive universities from those focused on undergraduate teaching is that sub-Saharan Africa's population is set to double by 2050. This will create continued demand for higher education. That, in turn, necessitates appropriate training of faculty with advanced degrees. It is this cohort who will be needed to staff the new universities and maintain high standards across the higher education system. Research-intensive universities are the best place to train such people.

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