1. University World News

**Predatory journals in the firing line (South Africa)**

South Africa’s Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has begun clamping down on academics publishing in predatory journals, withholding at least ZAR62 million (US$4.2 million) in subsidies during the 2016-17 academic year, with further action on the cards once a study is completed, according to Mahlubi 'Chief’ Mabizela, a senior department official. “Predatory publishing is a threat to the credibility of academic publishing worldwide. We withheld 574.86 units and the Rand value for 2016-17 was ZAR108,693 (574.86 units x ZAR108,693 = ZAR62,483,257). However, as much as this is the total amount withheld, it is immediately put in the same budget of the funding distributed to institutions, making the Rand value slightly higher,” said Mabizela, the chief director for university education policy and development in the department. That means, if an institution was affected by a predatory journal publication, it would not receive the units and the money for those units would be redistributed to the entire budget, Mabizela told University World News. He said the department has commissioned the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) at Stellenbosch University to conduct a study on the quality of South Africa’s research publications, which includes predatory publishing. “CREST is finalising the report for submission to the department. The findings and recommendations of the report would be useful to devise strategies for dealing with the journals suspected of being predatory,” according to Mabizela. In their article – the first study to analyse the extent of predatory publishing in South Africa – published in the South African Journal of Science in 2017, Johann Mouton and Astrid Valentine found that 4,246 South African papers published in 48 journals were either probably or possibly predatory. “A few South African studies and reports have appeared in recent years which have suggested that predatory publishing is not only present but is in fact becoming more pervasive – at least in some disciplines. There has been a surge of interest in predatory publishing and its effects in recent years,” the academics wrote. Read more [here](#).

2. University World News

**Regional incubators to tap research potential of academics (Africa)**

Four of the 24 university-based World Bank Africa Centres of Excellence (ACEs) have been selected as sites for the establishment of regional incubation centres for East and Southern Africa aimed at fostering university-industry links and providing graduate students and faculty with a platform from which to commercialise their research. The centres, based in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania, will each receive a US$250,000 from the World Bank as seed funding geared towards turning research findings and innovations into tangible and impactful products and services for the socio-economic development of society in the key areas of industry, agriculture, health, and education/applied statistics. Their establishment is intended to bring academia and industry closer together. The Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), a regional facilitation unit for the World Bank-supported Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence (ACE II) Project, selected the four centres from among the 15 that applied.
They include the Africa Centre of Excellence in Energy for Sustainable Development (ACEESD) at the University of Rwanda; the Africa Centre for Research, Agricultural Advancement, Teaching Excellence and Sustainability (CREATEs) at the Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology in Tanzania; the Centre for Pharm-Biotechnology and Traditional Medicine (PHARMBIOTRAC) at Mbarara University of Science and Technology in Uganda; and the Centre of Excellence in Phytochemicals, Textiles and Renewable Energy (PTRE) based at Moi University, Kenya.

Over the five-year duration of the ACE II Project, the centres collectively aim to publish almost 1,500 journal articles, launch more than 300 research collaborations with private sector and other institutions, and produce other academic and research outputs such as patents. “The World Bank believes strongly in the innovation potential of African research, as a key lever in the continued economic development of the continent, and these incubation centres will serve as important hubs where the impact of research can be transformed to commercial opportunities. We hope these centres will be the first among many to follow,” said Dr Roberta Malee Bassett, senior education specialist at the World Bank and task team leader for the ACE II Project. The IUCEA and the World Bank believe that such incubation centres will also help to build important linkages between academia and industry to help galvanize business growth in priority areas. IUCEA received 15 proposals which were evaluated by an international team of experts with extensive experience in business incubation, start-up creation and successful commercialisation of innovations.

Read more here

3. University World News

Universities urged to pursue their own research agendas (Africa)

The time has come for African institutions of higher education to pursue Africa-focused research with real-life impact rather than follow research agendas set by foreign funders. This was the view expressed by Professor James Gashumba, vice-chancellor of Rwanda Polytechnic, who said a lack of research by African institutions was a serious challenge that needed concerted efforts to be addressed. Speaking on the final day of the fifth regional forum for the Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET) held in Kigali, Rwanda, Gashumba said: “It is a serious challenge that Africa still lags behind in research; most research that is carried out also has the challenge of being dictated by foreign researchers who partner with Africans, and if they don’t understand the topic, they will not support it.” He said the time has come for Africa to stand up and do its own research which would require political will to invest in the sector and in closer partnerships with industry to ensure that more practical skills are acquired. “There is a need for Africa to revolutionise the way courses are delivered in our universities (both technical and higher learning institutions); we need technology and innovations to drive our education and we need to carry out more applied research which addresses our own issues,” he said. The PASET forum, which brought together experts from different fields including academia, focused on the fourth industrial revolution and its opportunities and risks for Africa. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s research report, Africa’s share of global research was 2.6% in 2014. This poor performance is the result of factors such as limited capacity and finance as African Union governments remain slow to deliver on their pledge to increase funding for research. “The research in most of the African countries is quite low; the scientific output is low. Second, there is the issue of lack of sufficient funding,” said Moses Osiru, manager of the Regional Scholarship and
Innovation Fund (RSIF), the PASET flagship programme aimed at increasing the number of African PhD holders. “Africa has set a target for at least 1% of countries’ GDP to go to research in science and technology but at present this is not happening; very few countries are meeting this target,” he said. Africa is also faced with the challenge of pursuing research that does not respond to the needs and priorities of the continent. Osiru said many types of research projects are short-term, like three years, whereas what was needed were more long-term projects of up to 20 years or so which have greater impact. He said Africa needed to think about differentiation of higher education.

“We need research-intensive universities that can focus on research,” he said.

4. University World News

Mentorship project to help early career women researchers (Africa)

The Alliance for African Partnership (AAP), a collaborative research initiative made up of eight African universities and headed by Michigan State University of the United States, will from September commence a mentorship project meant to benefit early career female researchers in the eight universities. The partnership will deliver the project through its African Futures Research Leadership Program (AFRLP), a vehicle designed to nurture young female research leaders. It will begin by recruiting and mentoring a pioneer cohort of eight young academics spread across AAP consortium institutions. The institutions are Egerton University in Kenya, Makerere University in Uganda, University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Malawi, University of Botswana, University of Nigeria in Nsukka in Nigeria, Cheikh Anta Diop University in Senegal, and the University of Arts and Humanities of Bamako in Mali. Beneficiaries will be female scholars employed as academic staff members with a PhD degree under three years old, and will be picked in September following the recent call for applications that closes on 6 June. They are expected to be drivers of research in their institutions, not only in their own field of study, but also across the broader research agenda, becoming part of the next generation of researchers, according to José Jackson-Malete, co-director of the AAP. Visiting scholars will spend one year at Michigan State University (MSU) working with a mentor from the American university and a mentor from their home institution, engaging in research, curriculum development, as well as in a “structured academic development programme” covering subjects including grant writing and manuscript writing. Fellows will be taken through professional development activities that will help them establish their professional trajectories, and leadership activities exposing them to first-hand academic administration including operations, expectations, opportunities and challenges that come with administrative positions. They will gain from collaboration networks and have access to AAP’s broad network of researchers around the world.

Read more here

5. University World News

New postgraduate academy to build research capacity (Mali)

A postgraduate academy in Bamako in Mali, aimed at strengthening fundamental research in the humanities and social sciences in African countries, is due to start in July and initially run until July 2022. Researchers from Goethe University Frankfurt in Germany and the University of Basel in Switzerland are working together on the 'Pilot African Postgraduate Academy' (PAPA), with €973,000
(US$1.1 million) funding from the Gerda Henkel Stiftung. The programme targets early career researchers who have recently completed their doctoral degree in humanities or social sciences and who work at universities in Africa. It aims to deepen their understanding of the value of science for its own sake while fostering their interest in conceptual fundamental research. “The project is focused on early career researchers from seven francophone African countries that despite notable progress continue to play only a minor role in global knowledge production,” the academy said in a statement. “Africa is not only in need of applied research based on the needs of the development industry, but of excellent research that makes a contribution to the further development of global knowledge production as well, both in substance and in method,” said Professor Mamadou Diawara, an anthropologist from the institute for ethnology at Goethe University Frankfurt, who started the idea of the academy together with Professor Elísio Macamo from the Centre for African Studies, University of Basel. The academy will be attached to the independent research centre 'Point Sud' in Bamako, Mali, founded by Diawara in 1997 and financed by Goethe University Frankfurt since 2003. The academy briefing says an educational programme will be set up to encourage the scholars to engage in critical dialogue with their disciplines and their identity as scientists researching critical academic questions. Carefully selected young scientists will be intensively supervised to enable them to teach and publish at a new level after completing the three-year PAPA training. Twice a year, there will be two-week workshops for 15 selected early career researchers and up to four established academics in Bamako. The mentoring programme is designed to connect high-ranking researchers and award-winners with their homeland institutions. Mentors for the programme will be drawn from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Mali, Niger and Senegal. The academy will further tap the expertise of the Bureaucratisation of African Societies project in Dakar, the newly founded Institute for Advanced Studies in Accra, the Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa, the Institutes for Advanced Study in Stellenbosch and Nantes, and the new 'Africa Multiple' Cluster of Excellence at the University of Beyreuth.

Read more here

6. University World News
Two universities to offer youth development degrees (Mauritius)
Two Mauritian universities have been selected to offer youth development degrees as part of the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work programme. The University of Mauritius and the Open University of Mauritius will start offering the degree from August 2019. The degree is equivalent to a bachelor degree qualification in Mauritius and will be made available as an open education resource through the Commonwealth of Learning. It constitutes an upgrade of the Commonwealth Diploma in Youth Development Work. “The programme will help motivate and guide the young people in their personal and professional development as well as turn them into responsible citizens,” according to Mauritian Minister of Youth and Sports Stephan Toussaint. “One of the government’s priorities is to contribute to a supportive enabling environment for young people so as to create a pool of youth talent.” He also spoke of the need for greater investment in the education sector by promoting the professional recognition, education and training of youth. “Professionalisation of the youth work sector is one of the key recommendations made by member governments, which is being implemented by the Commonwealth through its consortium,” said Amina Osman, the
Commonwealth’s education advisor. At the Ninth Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in 2017 held in Kampala, Uganda, ministers agreed to promote youth work as a profession through education and training for sectors where youth engagement is important. The Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work was formally launched at the meeting to support 16 universities from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Europe to offer a low-cost, internationally recognised Commonwealth bachelor degree in youth development work. “The capacity of young people for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship is widely recognised as invaluable in stimulating a sustainable return to social and economic well-being in countries. Young people bring about a more inclusive society – provided they have the right support at the right time,” said Osman. R Duva Pentiah, chairperson of Open University of Mauritius, said the degree aimed to support the education and training of youth workers, and contribute to strengthening youth work policy and practice, given that youth empowerment is critical in realising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Read more [here](#)

### 7. University World News

**University resources – Imperatives for efficient utilisation (Ethiopia)**

The expansion and diversification of tertiary education across the globe is welcomed as a remarkable development, but an accompanying hurdle has been the inability of governments to meet the financial demands that come with expansion. This can have a multitude of challenges and ramifications. Although diversified financing strategies have most often been suggested as the panacea for addressing such challenges, equally important is the capacity of institutions to properly utilise their existing capacities and resources. Despite the government’s continued commitment to the growth of higher education in Ethiopia, many local and international observers ask how a country like Ethiopia, with meagre resources and significant competing demands such as clean water, roads, etc, is able to afford and-or sustain the financing of its higher education sector and meet its quest for growth. In fact, as far back as 2003 the World Bank aptly commented on the financial sustainability of Ethiopia’s higher education expansion schemes as follows: “Matching goals with means is at the crux of the challenge facing policy-makers in Ethiopia.” The observation in Ethiopia’s new Education Roadmap of 2018 with regard to the difficulty of reaching 22% gross enrolment in higher education by 2025 echoes the World Bank’s earlier observation and forewarns that achieving this goal is unlikely because of the lack of available resources and the existing financing modalities. The answer to this conundrum lies not only in an improvement of the existing pattern of higher education financing, but also in the efficient utilisation of available resources, among others. The quest for efficiency through the proper utilisation of resources should be one of the major goals of Ethiopian higher education institutions since it can make a significant contribution towards ensuring the sustainability of the higher education sector. The internal efficiency required of higher education institutions can be augmented through a variety of strategies including, but not limited to, having the right student-to-faculty and administrative staff-to-faculty ratios, reducing student attrition and dropout rates, outsourcing non-academic services, instituting efficient financial and procurement systems, and introducing a diversified means of educational delivery. The teacher-to-student ratio in the regular undergraduate programmes was very low two decades back but has shown a constant upward climb over the years. It was 1:8 in 1992, 1:12 in 2003,1:28 in 2008-09 and
1:26.4 in 2014-15. The changes were the result of an aggressive expansion scheme pursued by the government. However, after having achieved the efficient ratio set by the ministry (around 1:25) the ratio dropped to 1:13.3, according to recent information from the Ministry of Education (2016-17).

Exploring the reasons why the system has started losing its efficiency can have wider implications, especially at a time when a significant number of universities complain about the excessive teaching load of their instructors, especially in particular areas of studies. Although a major concern in the Ethiopian higher education sector even before the expansion started, student attrition rates in most universities appear to show a declining trend over the last decade. Notwithstanding the reasons for such a decline (itself an area of some debate), there are still significant numbers of students dropping out for a variety of academic and non-academic reasons.

Read more [here](#).

8. **University World News**

*How universities are making more students multilingual (South Africa)*

South Africa is a multilingual, multicultural space. As is the case for many other countries in Africa, it has a number of official languages – 11. Although the South African Constitution, other legislation and some policies promote the use and development of all 11 languages, this does not happen in practice. For instance, the country’s courts operate with English as the sole and official language of record. In higher education, too, English tends to be the dominant language. This is despite the fact that English is only the country’s sixth most commonly spoken home language. But the good news is that universities are becoming increasingly aware that they have an important role to play in ensuring that students do more than just graduate – they also need to be linguistically competent to work in sectors of society where the majority of people who access services can’t speak English. That’s where vocation-specific language courses come in. These focus on teaching students the words and phrases they need to interact with different people in the course of particular professional work. Cuba, for instance, provides this sort of vocation-specific language support for South African medical students training in that country. These courses can encourage both linguistic and cultural awareness. They can equip students with the basics they need to communicate. For example, journalists, pharmacists or lawyers deal with clients from different linguistic backgrounds. These courses have been introduced at a number of universities in South Africa. This hasn’t been a universally accepted move. Some academics have argued that this approach “takes students off course” and distracts them from the key purpose of their degrees. But there’s a growing body of evidence that suggests these courses are working – and producing graduates who can function well in professional multilingual environments. These courses are valuable because they create citizens who are more aware of the backgrounds of the people they are dealing and living with. Universities started developing vocation-specific language courses in the decade after apartheid ended. The University of Cape Town was among the pioneers, introducing isiXhosa for medical students in 2004. In doing so, it recognised the need to equip students linguistically to work with patients who spoke this language, which is the country’s second most common home language. Today, the structure of vocation-specific language courses differs from university to university. They can be offered at both mother tongue and second language levels. They can be compulsory and credit bearing or offered as additional courses. They can be integrated into the mainstream curricula or they can be studied separately. All universities have language policies, which allow for these permutations.
Note to Editors/PROs:

To share news/events about your Universities, contact;

**Name:** Maureen Agena  
**Corporate Communication Advocacy & Officer**

**Email:** communications@ruforum.org