University World News

Understanding the impact of grants at universities (Africa)

Since Africa’s earliest modern public universities were established on the continent in the 1940s, these institutions have struggled to generate adequate and sustainable funding. For the most part, universities on the continent depend on money from national governments; grants; donations from international donor communities and industries to fund their learning, teaching and research activities. But most lack proper institutional evaluation to record and track the outcomes of various grants after projects or programmes are completed. Usually, evaluations entail nothing more than a financial audit report and main outcome of the project. This approach does little to show how a particular tranche of funding has contributed to a university achieving its mission, vision and short-to long-term plans. But universities favour it because they pride themselves on being autonomous and self-regulating. For instance, in recent times some African universities have received grants to train PhD candidates in various fields. When the grants end, there’s only one key indicator: how many beneficiaries have graduated. This doesn’t take into account whether the project followed proper systems of accountability. It also doesn’t identify the various lessons learned from implementing the project. That means there’s no learning platform for future projects. I set out to study how universities in Africa evaluate funding once programmes or projects are completed. I also offered some ideas about improving this evaluation, and why it is so important. I argue that evaluation is a critical tool for decisions on improving performance. It also ensures that African universities are getting value for money from grants, donations and the like. For starters, it’s useful to identify where university funding is coming from in Africa. Grants are popular. So is financial support from national governments, Northern and Western universities. The international donor community is involved, too, and so are philanthropic organisations. Some examples from across the continent show just how varied and valuable grants are. In the 2015-16 academic year, the Office of Research, Innovation and Development at the University of Ghana received US$32 million from nine international donor agencies. In 2010, a grant profiling on the University of Ibadan in Nigeria’s website revealed that the university had 106 grants worth more than US$17 million – and that 101 of those providing the grants were international. The University of Nairobi in Kenya is not clear on the amount it receives from donors. But, of the 16 donors it mentions on its website, only one is Kenyan. So how are these grants and donations assessed? In the last 15 years many of the continent’s universities have established grant offices. Their role is to strategise and attract funds from external sources. But in most cases these offices don’t have clear ‘grant policies’ to guide their operations and the use of grants received. This lack of clear policy also means that programmes implemented under external grants can’t be properly evaluated by the universities when those grants expire. This isn’t always a problem. International donors almost always have systems in place to evaluate the use and impact of their grants. But industry donors and governments tend not to. So there really isn’t any way for universities to know if these grants are worthwhile, effective and add value.

Read more [here](#)
University World News

When TVET fails to provide the answers (Ethiopia)

The Ethiopian technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system has well-organised components: an outcome-based system, cooperative training that involves industries and training institutions, and an assessment scheme that operates on the basis of nationally defined occupational standards. In addition to the development of a revised national TVET Strategy (2008) that accommodates most of the changes, a National TVET Council was set up to shoulder the responsibility of overseeing and coordinating the overall function and effectiveness of TVET at a national level. TVET as a sector is led by a state minister accountable to the minister of science and higher education. While a Federal TVET Agency has been set up to oversee the implementation of the TVET strategy, a Federal TVET Institute has also been established to assist in the upgrading of the skill levels of trainers. Despite carrying a long history behind it, the system appears to have made fundamental reforms in the areas mentioned only in the last two decades. As a result, the number of TVET institutions built across the country has substantially increased. Access has similarly improved, especially for women who now represent more than 50% of enrolment in the sector, though still in areas which are considered to be the traditional domains for females. However, the question remains as to how much these numerical and structural changes have been translated into significant quality outcomes expected of the sector. TVET is assumed to fulfil a variety of national goals. It is conceived as a primary tool not only to facilitate technology transfer but also to produce the middle-level skilled manpower the country needs to spur its industry-led growth strategy aimed at transforming Ethiopia into a middle-income country. As set out in the 2008 national strategy, TVET aims at creating a competent and adaptable workforce that would serve as the backbone of economic and social development. This objective is echoed in other country-wide strategies and development plans set by the government. In terms of operational plans the policy directions further indicate that 80% of those who complete secondary education are expected to be absorbed into the TVET stream. While this target has not been met for many years now, a more worrying trend that is surfacing is related to the output of TVET institutions. Counter to the aims for which it was created and the many expectations it raised, TVET appears to be failing in terms of delivering on its promises. One of the most common observations is related to the poor output of TVET institutions as regards addressing the demands of the economy and the low quality of graduates. The failure has been exhibited particularly in the mismatch between the skills needed in the job market and the training given at TVET institutions. This has led to a situation in which many TVET graduates are unemployed, even in areas where there is a particularly high demand for skilled manpower.

Read more here
University World News
Plagiarism – What can curb the scourge? (Nigeria)
Does the high incidence of plagiarism among students in Nigeria point to the need for more support and mentoring for students or more effective sanctions against those found to be guilty? Or maybe both? Earlier this year Professor Peter Okebukola, one-time executive secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC), repeated his concerns about the rising rate of plagiarism among students in universities. The previous November, during the first in a series of education lectures at Kwara State University, he claimed that 60% of long essays by final-year undergraduates contained plagiarism; at masters level it was between 15-20% and at PhD level about 8% contained plagiarism. Worried about the erosion of academic values and the potent dangers of plagiarism, many academic staff are in favour of stiffer penalties against students and staff who aid and abet plagiarism.

Dr Daniel Ekharefo, a lecturer at the University of Benin, said it rarely happens that a student is disciplined for plagiarism because lecturers intervene. “The student can ask another lecturer to plead with the project supervisor and in some cases, the lecturer can compromise and ask for money in order to clear the student,” he reportedly said. Professor Hyacinth Ichoku, vice-chancellor of the University of Veritas, Abuja, was of the view that there is insufficient mentoring of students by their teachers and awareness of the principles of research ethics. He suggested the need for a series of workshops to look at the various dimensions of plagiarism and how to detect them.

He warned that proven cases of plagiarism could lead to court litigation where both the student and the teacher, and even the university could be slapped with sanctions and penalties. “This kind of a scenario could be a source of national and international embarrassment to the university, especially in this era of university rankings,” he said in an interview with University World News. Initiatives to stamp out the increasing plagiarism plague have been undertaken. For example, Dr Emmanuel Unuabonah, a chemistry lecturer at the Redeemers University at Ede in the south western region, created a movement known as the Nigerian Young Academy (NYA), an offshoot of the Nigerian Academy of Science (NAS) for young scientists.

Read more here

University World News
Global tech company partners give hope to local innovators (Uganda)
Many Ugandan students are highly talented and have amazing ideas, but they lack the support needed to pull off groundbreaking innovations – which is why partnerships with global tech companies such as Google and Huawei have so much to offer, according to a local computer science academic whose research team secured a Google innovation award for their artificial intelligence project. “It is never an easy task and can be quite frustrating for ICT [information and communications technology] or other university students trying to pull off groundbreaking innovations in these lands,” said Dr Engineer Bainomugisha, an associate professor for computer science at Makerere University’s College of Computing and Information Sciences and project leader for the AirQo project, which last month scooped an award from Google valued at US$1.3 million. AirQo is an air monitoring project that uses artificial intelligence and low-cost technologies to generate and quantify data on air pollution in designated areas in Uganda.
According to Bainomugisha, local students lack mentorship and exposure. They also lack confidence to believe they can make it to the top. As a result, many of the students who, in other settings might evolve into some of the best innovators, end up “dying” with their concepts, without seeing them reach prototype level. The absence of a supportive environment is a huge hurdle. “Many of our students are talented. They have all these amazing ideas. But they lack the support to develop them into tangible innovations,” said Bainomugisha. Then there is the challenge of funding. For his AirQo innovation, Bainomugisha approached the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) for resources. Because his prototype promised the city a more accurate way to monitor air pollution, it was a no-brainer for the city authority to loosen its purse strings and fund the project. By the time Bainomugisha approached Google, he and his team had 50 air monitors deployed across the city. But not many, let alone students, can access KCCA’s coffers. “Our government does not release enough money [to institutions of higher learning] for research and innovations,” said Bainomugisha. The limited funds the universities receive for innovations are from donors, he said. But that might change with a new partnership between Makerere University and global tech company Huawei, aimed at bridging the divide and exposing more local students to international innovators.

University World News

Delayed pay – How do private university lecturers cope? (Rwanda)

Lecturers offering courses in various private universities across Rwanda are concerned over delayed payment of their salaries, saying it affects their lives and the way courses are dispensed. Some of them have turned to the courts to resolve the situation. The delays in the payment of both academic and administrative staff are common, the only difference being the length of time for which employees go unpaid. For instance, at the University of Kibungo (UNIK) based in Ngora district in Eastern Province, some lecturers last received their salaries in August last year, while at the Christian University of Rwanda, which has about 2,000 students in colleges in Kigali city and in Karongi district in Western Province, some lecturers say they have been without pay for eight months. Very few universities can pay regularly. “It is a serious problem. I have not been paid for the last eight months and I have no hope to receive any payment soon as the university management has turned a deaf ear to our queries,” said a journalism lecturer at the Christian University of Rwanda who requested anonymity. He said the university owes him RWF3.5 million (about US$3,900). “We need to pay for rent, buy food and other basic needs such as transport, but this is hard for us because of rampant salary delays,” he said. The university started in 2016, and in less than three years there are members of the staff the university has not been paid for over a year. “We can’t teach properly as we are not motivated; life is complicated because we are not paid; quality of education is being affected as well,” said another lecturer. A lecturer at UNIK, formerly known as the Institute of Agriculture, Technology and Education of Kibungo, said she was last paid in August last year. “The university owes me 10 months’ [salary] in total and I am struggling to survive. I am deeply indebted to many people and I don’t know how I will clear the debts I am still accumulating,” she said. She said the university has crafted a strategy to give transport to lecturers so that they can keep teaching. Everyone gets RWF10,000 (US$11) per week for transport, which does not cover the full cost of transport.
The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)

Read more [here](#)

**Scidev**

**Water programmes ‘inadequate’ in African universities (Kenya)**

Despite Sub-Saharan Africa facing protracted water problems, only one per cent of universities in the sub-region offer water education programmes, a study has found. According to the study, higher education related to water is key to building capacity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal that focuses on water and sanitation for all by 2030. Thus, the study assessed 28,077 institutions of higher education for water-related programmes. Water education is a diverse set of skills in fields such as biology, chemistry, physics, geology, civil engineering, economics, political science, sociology and law, explains Colin Mayfield, author of the study and professor emeritus at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. “No comprehensive survey of the role of universities in integrating these skill sets to provide available programmes for students entering water-related fields has been performed,” says Mayfield. “To provide the skilled personnel required, more of the education needs to happen in the countries most affected and efforts should be made to increase the educational activities of local institutions.” The study published in the Report Series 7 of the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health last month (29 May) assessed only universities ranked in the Shanghai Academic Ranking System for 2019. According to the study, 40 per cent of universities in North America and Europe offer a programme in water, with the figure for those in the regions West Asia and North Africa, East Asia and South-East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean being 16 per cent each. Central Asia and South Asia have seven per cent of universities offering a programme in water, making Sub-Saharan the region with the least percentage of only one. “In Africa, 115 people die every hour from diseases linked to poor sanitation, poor hygiene and contaminated water,” says Mayfield, adding that more than 300 of the 800 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa live in a water-scarce environment. George Krhoda, a member of the African Groundwater Commission, African Union, tells SciDev.Net that in Sub-Saharan Africa schools of water science are few, poorly funded and have limited human resources. Read more [here](#)

**Time**

‘It’s time Africa had Its Own Harvard.’ Inside a University Training African Leaders to Solve African Problems (Mauritius)

With its modernist buildings, spacious grounds and airy cafeteria packed with young adults slinging backpacks while scrolling through their Instagram feeds, the African Leadership University on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius looks much like any other college campus. Except, perhaps, when it comes to the library. Here you will find no silent temple to books and knowledge; in fact, the university’s Pure Learning Library has no books at all. Instead there’s a cacophonous din of competing ideas, as students convene in animated groups around communal tables, shouting out solutions while feverishly diagramming them on the whiteboards that panel the walls. “We aren’t really encouraged to be quiet here,” explains Jeremiah Nnadi, a second year Computer Science student from Nigeria, with a shrug. “We believe that the best way to learn is from our colleagues. Regurgitating the stuff you memorized from books just to pass an exam isn’t really going to solve
Africa’s problems, is it?” While books can be found elsewhere on campus, ALU’s approach to educating the next generation of African leaders looks a lot different from the traditional Western universities it was once modeled upon, starting with the scope of its ambition. When the Ghana-born, Stanford Business School-educated entrepreneur Fred Swaniker opened the Mauritius campus in 2015, he not only pledged to build 25 more like it in Africa, he also promised to produce 3 million young African leaders over the next 50 years. The first class of those leaders, made up 79 people hailing from more than 40 countries across the continent, graduate on June 12. For Swaniker, this graduation serves as the first milestone in an ambitious program to reinvent education for a new generation in a uniquely African context. It is also the solution to an unanticipated problem that sprung up when he first sought to disrupt African education. In 2008, Swaniker launched his African Leadership Academy in Johannesburg, recruiting high school students from across the continent and promising to prepare them for the best universities the world had to offer. But once they got into those Ivy League and European universities, they rarely came back. “I realized we were actually contributing to the brain drain,” says Swaniker. “So I said it’s time that Africa had its own Stanford and MIT and Harvard. But instead of replicating the universities that were built for another era, we should build a university that looks to the future, that educates the leaders Africa needs.”

The Mauritius campus, with a residential program catering to 355 students, focuses on collaborative learning and pan-African leadership examples. Each classroom is dedicated to a influential African leader or artist — the Sankore wing, referencing one of the oldest universities in the world, in Timbuktu, Mali, features classrooms named after Ethiopian runner Haile Gebrselassie, U.N. general-secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali and South African writer Bessie Head; the faculty lounge celebrates South African anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko. The four dormitories are dedicated to the great African civilizations, such as Axum, Kongo, and Songhai. Even the cafeteria aspires to pan-African cuisine, though Nnadi, the Nigerian computer-science student, says the attempt to create his nation’s national dish, jollof rice, “needs a lot of help.”

Read more [here](#)