1. University World News

Over 100 PhDs face review in single university (Kenya)

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) has defended as “meritoriously earned” its doctoral degrees awarded over the past year – despite a recent report by the regulator highlighting inadequate supervision and other irregularities which has thrown the validity of up to 118 PhDs into doubt. The Quality Audit Panel of the Commission for University Education (CUE) conducted the inquiry over two days last month after an “inordinately high” number of PhD awards were made during the institution’s 33th graduation ceremony on 21 June – a number which had become a “matter of public interest”. The audit also included the 32nd graduation held in November 2018 and the 31st graduation in June 2018. The CUE report, a copy of which has been seen by this publication, found that many PhD supervisors had supervision loads way beyond the threshold of three PhDs and five Masters in an academic year as provided under the Universities Standards and Guidelines. One academic, for example, was found to have been the sole supervisor for 41 master’s students – across 10 disparate disciplines – and 14 PhD students. “... In the recent three graduations, three supervisors from CoHRED [College of Human Resource Development] each graduated: 41; 30; 33 PhD students, respectively. In addition, each of the three supervisors graduated 45, 106 and 72 Master’s students ... The three graduations took place within a period of 12 months,” the report states. Over 73% of the doctorates awarded during the three ceremonies emanated from the College of Human Resource Development (CoHRED), while only 8% and over 4% came from the College of Health Sciences and College of Agricultural and Natural Resources respectively. It also found that in some cases there was no paperwork to prove supervision had taken place on a required three-monthly basis. “The compromised quality of supervision was evidenced by examiners’ reports and defense committees reports that highlighted fundamental issues in the theses ... issues that ordinarily ought to have been identified during supervision,” the report states. Other problems related to irregular constitution of the board of examiners and a lack of evidence of student seminar presentations. In one case, a student was found to have completed his or research, published, and indicated an intention to submit in less than 12 months following a successful defence of the proposal. The report also found that some Journals in which students had published (PhD students are required to publish two papers in refereed journals) were non-existent and there was “a likelihood of conflict of interest” where the editorial boards of a number of the journals in which students published included CoHRED faculty members.

Read more here

Another version “Graduates from Kenya’s Jomo Kenyatta University risk losing PhD degrees Read more here
2. Africa News

Liberia president declares free tuition in all public universities (Liberia)

President George Manneh Weah on Thursday declared that all undergraduates public entering universities across the country will enjoy free tuition. “Today, I’m excited to announce that I have declared the University of Liberia and all other Public Universities in Liberia tuition free for all undergraduates,” Weah wrote on Facebook without giving any further details. Reports indicate that he made the declaration before students of the University of Liberia at the Capitol Hill campus located in the capital Liberia. The announcement was met with loud cheers and applause. An undergraduate is a university student who has not yet received a degree. The West African country currently has four public universities. Aside the main University of Liberia, UL, the Booker Washington Institute, Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law and the William V.S. Tubman University, complete the list. Students had recently protested against fee hikes accusing the UL administration of unilaterally hiking fees. The students eventually had the audience of the president who promised to look into the issue. It was at the same meeting that Weah announced that he will visit the school, a promise he kept and during which he disclosed the news. Many economic watchers are now waiting to see the costing mechanism and other fine details of the program. Most African countries are grappling with implementing free education even at the basic level. Ghana started an ambitious free Senior High School system which continues to be faced with challenges. Sierra Leone is also in the process of implementing free primary education. The former world footballer of the year won the presidency early this year after leading a coalition to defeat the then ruling party’s candidate, Joseph Boakai. Reports indicate that the University of Liberia took in about half of the expected 20,000 students for the 2018/2019 semester with the main reason pegged on the fee hikes.

Read more here

3. Daily Nation

Sierra Leone President Maada Bio announces free education for Children (Sierra Leone)

Sierra Leone's new President Julius Maada Bio on Thursday announced the introduction of free education for both primary and secondary school age children, in line with a major campaign pledge. "Free education will be introduced effective September 2018 for all primary and secondary schools to improve access to quality education," President Bio told the state opening of parliament, to thunderous applause. Bio took office in early April after a tumultuous election campaign, ending a decade-long rule by the All People's Congress (APC). He also announced a near doubling — from 11 to 20 percent — of the education sector's annual budgetary allocation. "Free university education will be provided for three children of every school teacher with ten years' experience," he said, adding that a student loan scheme would be introduced as well as special incentives for science and rural based teachers. Strasser led the 1992-1996 junta before being overthrown by Bio who was then his deputy. The President also announced cuts in government expenditure to raise domestic revenue for the implementation of his development agenda. "My government will address our expenditure which is exceeding revenue generated causing severe strain on our national budget," he said. He also pledged to review the Mines and Minerals Act of 2009 to ensure people in mining communities directly benefit from their natural resources. And he announced the suspension with "immediate effect" of timber exports.
One of the poorest countries on the planet, despite huge mineral and diamond deposits, half of Sierra Leoneans over 15 are illiterate, according to a UNESCO 2015 report. It is recovering only gradually from war and a 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak that killed 4,000 people. Its economy remains fragile with investors slowly returning, and corruption is widespread. Political loyalties are often divided along ethnic lines and traumatic memories of the civil war run deep. Earlier this month, Sierra Leone held its first "national cleaning day" as part of a campaign by Bio to improve hygiene and the work rate of civil servants.

Read more here

4. University of Cape Town News

**Black women academics: ‘Stay in the system’ (South Africa)**

“Stay in the system, no matter how hard it is,” was the message from University of Cape Town (UCT) Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng to young black women researchers ahead of Women’s Day on 9 August. Phakeng was speaking at a lunch held at Graça Machel Hall, one of several events planned to honour women during International Women’s Month. These are backed by a campus-wide campaign on women’s identity, inviting UCT women to complete the phrase “I am...”. Addressing the young black women academics, Phakeng said: “The leadership at UCT is committed to [honouring women] and we invite you to join us as we change this space. “It’s not going to be comfortable and not everyone will like it ... but we’ve got to stay put because the work we are doing is important.” UCT has accepted the challenge, she said. At a similar event last year Phakeng launched the #UCTForWomxnByWomxn Scholarships, under the banner Advancing Women for Change. Aimed at postgraduate students and postdoctoral research fellows, these individual grants total R22.5 million over five years. The awardees were announced by Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Internationalisation Professor Sue Harrison in February this year. “These women will not only be conducting leading-edge research in fields where women are under-represented, and into women’s issues, but they will also be advancing the next generation of women and non-conforming gender transgender researchers,” Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Transformation Professor Loretta Feris said in her introduction. Statistics show that women face many barriers in academia. Of UCT’s 497 academics with NRF ratings, only 101, or 38%, are women. Only 76 (31%) of UCT’s professors are women, and only 15 of those are black South African women. But UCT has begun to make ground, Phakeng said. “The University of Cape Town is the only academic institution in the world with an all-women (academic) leadership. UCT can show the way raising up African women academics.” “Even with the diversity of their population, there are no more than 25 black women professors in some 130 universities in the entire UK... We in South Africa have an opportunity to show the world how to do it. But we still have a long way to go.”

Read more here

5. University World News

**Universities on collision course with government over reforms (Kenya)**

University administrators have rejected a series of drastic proposals by the Education Cabinet Secretary which, if effected, would change the face of the university sector. The proposals, put forward by Professor George Magoha, include the merging of some universities and campuses to leave the country with fewer institutions that are better-staffed and have adequate facilities to
The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) deliver high quality education. Magoha has proposed an audit of infrastructure projects in universities as part of moves to streamline university financial management systems. He has also asked universities – which have called for increases in tuition fees – to execute austerity measures aimed at freeing up funds for investment in academic projects and has ordered a freeze on the establishment of new campuses and told universities to consolidate similar academic programmes and focus on areas of specialisation. Furthermore, Magoha has asked university administrators to agree on how the mergers should be rolled out and provide an outline for the other reforms. The sector regulator, the Commission for University Education (CUE), was also asked to work on a framework for these reforms. Both reports were due on 31 July. However, events took a different turn last Friday with university lecturers, under the auspices of the Universities Academic Staff Union (Uasu), approaching the court to stop the planned mergers. They argue the plans are being undertaken unilaterally by the government. Although scheduled for 1 August the hearing was postponed. This week on Monday, vice-chancellors expressed their rejection of the mergers in a joint report to Magoha, and offered their own recommendations for the way forward. This includes an increase in the number of institutions to 100 on the basis that by 2030 close to 1 million students will be joining universities. And rather than cut staff numbers they have demanded more staff to improve lecturer-student ratios. The administrators are also demanding more funding from government to keep the institutions afloat. Their position puts academic leaders on a collision course with Magoha, the no-nonsense former University of Nairobi vice-chancellor who has insisted he will go all out to bring in the proposed changes. He has also castigated the CUE for not cracking the whip. “I was given instructions by President Uhuru Kenyatta after my appointment that there should be no more new universities. We must bring sanity in the university education sector. CUE is not doing its job; it should not allow mounting of courses without proper human resource and infrastructures. CUE should also not allow duplication of courses,” said Magoha. The universities have also rubbished Magoha’s order that they should not increase fees and are calling for the implementation of the Differentiated Unit Cost (DUC) system to allow universities to price education based on market requirements. “The current fees structure has been in existence since 1989 and it is clear that it has long been overtaken by events and is grossly overdue for review. Funding to a university in the case of DUC will be based on the student numbers on the one hand and nature of the programme the student is pursuing on the other hand. The DUC must, however, be distinguished from students fees. Students fees is simply the portion of the DUC that is met by the student from the student’s personal resources,” reads the vice-chancellors’ report.

Read more here

6. University World News

State universities draw ire over president’s honorary PhDs (Zimbabwe)

Zimbabwean state universities have been criticised for dishing out four honorary degrees to President Emmerson Mnangagwa since he came to power less than two years ago after the army ousted former president Robert Mugabe. The latest honorary degree to be awarded to Mnangagwa, who is chancellor of all state universities, was an honorary PhD in Defence and Security Studies bestowed last week during the inaugural graduation ceremony of the Zimbabwe National Defence University, formerly the National Defence College. In his citation, the university’s vice-chancellor, Air Vice Marshal Michael Moyo, said Mnangagwa had dedicated his life to the people of Zimbabwe. One
of his most notable contributions to the university was his support for the institution in Cabinet and Parliament during attempts to derail the transformation of the college into a fully-fledged university. The University of Zimbabwe, the country’s premier institution of higher learning, was the first to honour Mnangagwa in October last year with an honorary doctorate in Law. The university said Mnangagwa was a proponent of justice and the rule of law. Within a week, another state-run institution, the Great Zimbabwe University, awarded him an honorary doctorate in Politics and International Relations in recognition of his “unparalleled” contribution to society. Two months later Mnangagwa received an honorary law degree from Midlands State University. The University of Zambia followed in June this year with honorary doctorates in law for exceptional leadership and upholding the rule of law for both Mnangagwa and Zambian president Edgar Lungu. Former Zimbabwe National Students Union leader Makomborero Haruzivishi said the awards are an attempt to “panel-beat” Mnangagwa’s shortcomings by conferring him with honorary doctorates in areas of his specific weaknesses as a leader. Regarding the degrees for governance, he said: “The intensified corruption, decaying economy, unprecedented human rights atrocities by the military under his command and failure to deliver basic social service makes him the worst when it comes to good governance. “The same can be said of the doctorate in politics and international relations. It is unrealistic considering that in less than two years under his reign we have failed to mend any relations with critical international partners or receive any meaningful foreign partnership because of his failure to implement economic and political reforms,” he said. “The Honorary Doctorate in Law ... and the PhD in Defence and Security ... are a direct insult ... because his tenure is characterised by the subversion of Zimbabwe's constitution which may be an indicator as to why he disregards the law and bill of rights when advancing his power retention agenda during citizens’ demonstrations and elections.” Chairman of the parliamentary committee on education Daniel Fortune Molokele said the only issue that needs to be addressed is the appointment of the president as chancellor of all state universities. Universities have a right to award honorary doctorates to anyone they choose because they are supposed to be autonomous, he said.

Read more here

7. Digital Standard

*East African education standard below par (East Africa)*

University education is considered the axle for propelling economic growth and uplifting the developing countries. But the reality on the ground paints a negative picture, this is according to World Bank report 2017. The report further reveals that the enrolment rates for higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa are by far the lowest in the world at 6 per cent. The report also suggests that Nigeria, South Africa and Ethiopia both have the highest number of universities standing at 150,136 and 134 respectively. Uganda tops the ladder in the East Africa region with 46 universities followed by Kenya at 39 universities while Tanzania has 33 universities. Despite this high number of universities which should translate into economic growth based on the number of graduates churned, experts argue that 90 per cent of the graduates does not meet the job market skills. Most companies within the East African region have to retrain the graduates on the job which makes them incur an extra cost. Alex Awiti, Vice Provost and Interim Dean, Graduate School of Media and Communication, Aga Khan University believes that Kenya needs to revalue its university education to
propel its economy through skills. “The contradiction of unemployed graduates and a lack of skilled workforce is a problem that Kenya is facing as a result of poor training at the university level and that’s why as a country we continue to produce half-baked graduates who have no industry skills that can scale up our productivity level,” he poses. “Today most our students are not enrolling in areas like engineering and science areas face shortages of human resources and capacity within science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as well as agriculture and health, these are areas where we should focus on to ensure that we have well competent graduates, “adds Awiti. He added that the problem can be addressed from the ECDE level there is well-structured education that comprises of technical skills, talent and academics. He says that universities should fully invest in human resource to increase both the quantity and the quality of graduates. “To improve the link with employers and the graduates there is need to understand the industry need and I believe this can only be done by fostering strong local and international collaboration to raise quality,” he says.

The World Bank Group report reveals that poor governance and leadership is also a key challenge affecting most universities and higher learning institutions in Kenya and Africa at large. “Our university leadership is political, it depends on who is on the seat of power that calls the shots. Until we start having voice leadership where we ensure that those taking up the leadership of our institutions are goal-oriented and are ready to work with the rest of team to scale up these institutes then we shall continue to lag. The other key aspect is the need to embrace the adaptive style of leadership where we create a leadership system that adapts to change to grow the institutions,” comments Awiti. Awiti is also calling upon the government to invest heavily in research and innovation centres within the universities.

Read more [here](#)

8. Quatz News

**Data science institutions focused on Africa are being built across the continent (Africa)**

The term “data science” was coined by scientists working at the social networks LinkedIn and Facebook in 2008. A few years later, they dubbed it “the sexiest profession of the 21st century”. This relatively new, interdisciplinary field is a blend of statistics, computer science, mathematics, engineering and subject matter knowledge. In fact, any and all subjects qualify. Its proponents believe it will transform every aspect of society. Many of the disruptive, game-changing innovations that are grounded in data science are intended to improve people’s quality of life as well as the efficiency of processes and services. Examples include autonomous vehicles; precision medicine and precision agriculture; smart cities and financial technology. Over the past decade, virtually every university in Europe and North America has responded to the challenges and opportunities of data science by establishing new institutes, departments and degree programs in the field. The term “data science” was coined by scientists working at the social networks LinkedIn and Facebook in 2008. A few years later, they dubbed it “the sexiest profession of the 21st century”. This relatively new, interdisciplinary field is a blend of statistics, computer science, mathematics, engineering and subject matter knowledge. In fact, any and all subjects qualify. Its proponents believe it will transform every aspect of society. Many of the disruptive, game-changing innovations that are grounded in data science are intended to improve people’s quality of life as well as the efficiency of processes and services. Examples include autonomous vehicles; precision medicine and precision agriculture; smart cities and financial technology. Over the past decade, virtually every university in
Europe and North America has responded to the challenges and opportunities of data science by establishing new institutes, departments and degree programs in the field. These opportunities lie particularly in two areas. The first involves creating data science programs for people who aren’t on campus. The second relates to partnering with governments and businesses to address Africa’s most important societal challenges and capitalize on opportunities for economic growth. Less than 10% of people younger than 25 have access to higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is not that the continent’s youth are uninterested in a higher education degree. Many are simply unable to afford full-time on-campus studies. So, if students can’t come to the university, the university must come to the students. The internet and a myriad of innovative distance learning platforms make this possible. Only 40% of Africa’s population has access to the internet. That’s compared to 61% for the rest of the world. But the internet penetration rate is increasing faster on the continent than anywhere else. Bite-size online content can be taken as standalone modules or cumulated into a certified degree. Either way, online distance education formats can be offered at a lower cost. They are also more scalable than traditional classroom teaching. In this way, Africa’s youth has the chance to earn a degree while maintaining informal or formal employment. This makes it a financially viable proposition. They can also stay physically connected to their social networks of families and friends. This is important in preventing internal brain drains and exacerbating socio-economic disparities within and between African countries. Data science lends itself particularly well to being taught through online learning programs. This is because thriving in a virtual classroom requires the same creative, solution-oriented mindset that characterizes the best data scientists. And much of the program’s content—like managing and analyzing data, writing code and deploying software solutions—happens from behind a laptop which is connected to the Cloud anyway.

Read more here

9. Ghana Web
African governments urged to invest in distance education (Ghana)
Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, former Deputy Minister of Education has urged African governments to invest in Open University education because it is an alternative to traditional classrooms. He said distance education was the solution to addressing the educational needs of students, who could not be admitted into the public tertiary institutions due to work or family issues. The former Minister said this at the 36th congregation of Laweh Open University in Accra for the conferment and presentation of postgraduate and undergraduate degrees. According to Mr. Ablakwa, open University education was recognised as the future of higher education across the world. "Higher education which is the discovering of knowledge will be meaningless if it does not reflect in the transformation of society", he said. Mr. Ablakwa stated that the continent was crying for a new breed of African educated elite who would truly show the world that they were capable of managing its affairs.He said personal prosperity messages spearheaded by charismatic churches must give way to the prosperity of the community for sustained national development. He stressed that it behooved on all and sundry to sacrifice a little more to serve the country devoid of greed, corruption and practices that affect quality education. Research revealed that universities in Africa need to adopt new ways of teaching through technology, otherwise they might be rendered irrelevant and unable to compete on a global scale. Mr. Ablakwa reiterated that the higher education of the future
in Africa needed to restructure their curricula that was inclusive, innovative, intersectional and interdisciplinary.
Read more here

10. Mail and Guardian

Graduates and their unemployment dilemma (South Africa)

“You live on hope and faith, especially hope,” says Bafana Kunyane, 32. In 2011, he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in geology with honours from the University of the Western Cape. But he was not able to get a job in geology. “I felt like I was rejected,” he says. “It’s like it has taken a standstill. I hope some day my CV will be shortlisted. And I just want that mere opportunity to prove myself.” In 2016, Kunyane went for an interview for a position at a mine and was offered an internship. This was after years and years of not getting anything besides a post at an adult education centre. He accepted the internship, but left after two years, as he felt he was being exploited because the job title is about learning, but “we were actually doing the job”. Kunyane is now teaching at the adult education centre again, despite not having been paid for two months. “At this point in time, even if a job can arise in geology, I am happy where I am.” “I thought maybe after tertiary, everything was all going to be rosy,” says Jeniffer Morake, 29, who studied at Boston Media House College. She graduated in 2011 with a diploma in strategic media, majoring in advertising. “I was looking. I was applying and I was using my qualification to apply for different posts related to media. But nothing was available,” she says. In 2012, Morake started working for a community newspaper, but she soon resigned because of poor working conditions. “It was just bad … You go home and then feel like you are being abused.” Morake says her email outbox was full of CVs, but she didn’t even receive any responses. She was able to find small jobs, but not ones in her field of study. Eventually, she decided to diversify her career possibilities and she is now enrolled in an eight-week learnership with the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, where she has been promised work at a bank when she completes it. Colette Seema, 27, says she has given up on ever working in her field of study. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the School of Molecular and Life Sciences at the University of Limpopo. She worked as a lab assistant while she was studying, but since graduating has not been able to find work or even an internship. Seema has a young child and an urgent need to be self-sufficient. She is willing to take work as a cleaner, as long as she is earning an income. What is a degree to an impoverished family? Seema is the first and only university graduate in her family. She says her family doesn’t put her under pressure to find work in her field, but she feels bad. “They took their every cent to put me through school so that I can graduate and hopefully help out at home, because at home, we are really struggling.” She thought going to university would make her life better. “And then the next thing, you are stuck.” Kunyane’s experience echoes that of Seema. “Because even the family thinks this person has graduated and is the one to take us out of poverty,” he says.
Read more here
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