1. University World News

**New guidelines aim to ensure quality of distance learning (Tanzania)**

Institutions offering open and distance learning in Tanzania are expected to adhere to a new set of rules mapped out in the latest edition of the Handbook for Standards and Guidelines for University Education in Tanzania. Aimed largely at ensuring the quality of open, distance and e-learning (ODeL) programmes, the guidelines were released this month by the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU). In its third edition of the handbook, the commission spells out specific measures, actions and general conditions to guide the growing ODeL segment of higher education. The guidelines for open and distance education are part of a string of other requirements relating to higher education. Last week, University World News reported that in a bid to improve postgraduate education quality, the guidelines also stipulate that all postgraduate students pursuing either masters or doctoral degrees in Tanzanian universities are required to publish papers in reputable peer-reviewed journals before graduating. The new guidelines on distance education are an attempt to deal with ODeL more “systematically” than it was in the second edition published in 2014, according to the TCU. “This is so despite the fact that Tanzania is the only country in East Africa having a national university dedicated to the ODeL mode of delivery, the Open University of Tanzania, while some other residential universities in the country are also practising this delivery approach in a dual system,” the TCU notes. The guidelines say that ODeL institutions must offer programmes of the same quality as that of courses offered in physical classrooms, establish learning centres with qualified staff including administrative and academic staff, and provide requisite physical facilities and amenities. “An ODeL university shall ensure that the quality of the academic programmes offered through the mode as well as face-to-face delivery modes are comparable,” the guidelines stipulate. The centres must be adequately equipped with administrative and academic staff offices, reading and seminar rooms, well-equipped libraries, audio-visual spaces and computer rooms, with reliable internet and e-mail connectivity. Licensed institutions will only offer programmes accredited by the TCU and only after the commission has certified that a centre is suitable to host the programmes. Universities are also required to establish flexible access requirements to programmes, taking into consideration recognition of prior and experiential learning, provision of bridging courses and other support mechanisms, additional course inputs, and increased contact sessions, including special sessions for optimising the use of information and communications technology.

Read more [here](#)
2. Times Higher Education

**Call to create Europe-inspired African Research Council (Africa)**

Two leading university networks have called for the creation of an African Research Council and for a €1 billion (£835 million) a year investment in scholarship on the continent. An African Research Council would be modelled on the European Research Council and funded by the European Union and the African Union, according to a paper published by the Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities and the African Research Universities Alliance. According to the two networks, “an ambitious new initiative for African universities” is needed. Rapid population growth in Africa will create “dramatic challenges” for both it and Europe in the future, making it important to substantially increase the educational capacities of the continent’s universities, particularly at postgraduate level, the paper says. Introducing new continent-wide and regional competitive research-funding programmes in Africa, through an African Research Council, would be key to this, according to the report, which says the funder’s independence would have to be guaranteed by a scientific council. The report also calls for more funding for collaborative research involving European and African researchers, and the creation of 20 new doctoral schools, each supporting up to 100 PhD candidates a year. It also suggests that the EU-AU funding could bankroll half the cost of a new type of five-year postdoctoral post in African universities. Jan Palmowski, secretary general of the European guild, said that although the EU had already signalled that it was prioritising partnerships and investment in Africa, the guild and the ARUA felt that “it didn’t really have enough substance for genuine collaboration and partnership”. While the EU cannot match the huge amount of money that China has begun pouring into the continent, “it could do something that was genuinely positive and beneficial and really add to the solution”, he said. Ernest Aryeetey, secretary general of the ARUA, welcomed the plan. “African researchers have long been looking for an independent African institution capable of mobilising resources for research from the region and disbursing these in a professional manner,” he said. “An independent and well-resourced African Research Council, not subject to national politics, will be the ideal solution for many.”

Read more [here](#)

3. Study International

**How do US foundations influence higher education in Africa? (Africa)**

The ecosystem of donors in the higher education sector in Africa includes many foundations and international agencies, along with several development funds and pan-African organisations. Compared to other international organisations or governmental agencies like the World Bank, USAID, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the British Council, the International Development Research Center of Canada, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Danish Agency for International Development, the United Nations Development Programme, and many others, foundations have several advantages that these other institutions lack: they are independent and are free from the pressure of achieving short-term results; they can take risks and have developed a high degree of expertise in specific areas. Is it possible for foundations to create value in the field of higher education in Africa and to help universities transform and improve themselves? And how do they influence higher education in Africa?

The report adds that it is also critical that African governments prioritise investment in research and innovation themselves. Because of the constant need for new skills in knowledge societies and the
increasing obsolescence of industrial economies, higher education is once again being recognised as an engine of economic growth, especially on the African continent. However, the context in which African universities are evolving makes them increasingly precarious and they must adapt in order to survive, as was already demonstrated by William Saint in a 1992 report for the World Bank on the revitalisation of the higher education sector in Africa. All things considered, what is the role of international philanthropy in this context? The relationship between American grant-making institutions and their beneficiaries is by its nature unequal; therein lies the great dilemma of philanthropy. Nevertheless, universities are becoming increasingly important actors on the global market. Strong educational institutions can be a precious resource for countries trying to leverage their entrepreneurs and researchers onto the world stage, even if those institutions are structured according to a Western paradigm. Critics of philanthropy sometimes argue that foundations have “too much” power and point to the arrogance of donors, their lack of legitimacy, their poor planning and ethical conduct, and, in some cases, their corruption. While these questions are often raised in the US with reference to educational reform, similar issues can easily be found in cases where American foundations finance educational initiatives outside the US, such as the establishment of medical schools in China by the Rockefeller Foundation after World War I, Ford’s financing of intercultural publications after World War II through its publishing house established in 52 countries, or the development of higher education in Africa by the Carnegie Corporation during the period of decolonisation. Despite all this, the achievements of these foundations are remarkable considered the relatively small amount of money involved (US$4 billion between 2003 and 2013 in Africa) and their capacity to leverage funds from outside sources.

4. University World News

Higher education and the SDGs: more of the same? (General)
The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the predecessor of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have been widely criticised for overlooking higher education as an important factor in the development process. After decades of neglect by international organisations and domestic governments alike, the higher education sector across Africa has struggled to regain its footing, and the lack of attention to the sector within this international campaign further exacerbated the damage. Prior to their unveiling in 2015, many commentators anticipated that the SDGs, the internationally agreed-upon framework for tackling poverty, inequality, disease and climate change, would finally acknowledge higher education’s rightful role in realising social, economic and technological advancement, poverty reduction and wealth creation and sustainable global development. But it became clear that the SDGs were only a minor rehash of the MDGs. In contrast, local campaigns and policies, initiated by organisations on the continent, have a better focus on the crucial importance of higher education and, perhaps, should be leveraged as a way to direct necessary funding toward institutions across Africa. In 2015, shortly before the launch of the SDGs, a comprehensive set of policy actions was proposed by UN member states under the groundbreaking agreement of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, with a package of over 100 concrete measures to finance sustainable development, transform the global economy and achieve the SDGs. This agreement stipulated a strong foundation to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It provided a new global framework to finance sustainable
development by aligning all financing flows and policies with economic, social and environmental priorities. The wording of the agreement, which will affect the funding of nearly all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, underlines the fact that resource flows across the continent will be directly aligned to the priorities of the SDGs – in which, unfortunately, higher education has once again been given a very tenuous place. When analysing the 17 goals and 169 targets of the SDGs, it is striking to note that the words “higher” and “tertiary” education, and “university” appear just once each, and, in the case of “university”, in fact rather tangentially. The only goal in which higher education is explicitly mentioned is Goal 4, which stipulates inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities. There are also serious oversights in terms of particular issues related to higher education. For example, the document speaks only of ensuring equal access, not about expanding access or strengthening the sector. Despite higher education’s critical role in meeting all of the goals, the lack of active and seasoned lobbyists for higher education during the process leading to the SDGs is starkly evident in the virtual absence of higher education from this grand scheme.

Read more [here](#).

5. **Standard Digital**

**How to balance State control and autonomy in universities (Kenya)**

Since mid-January, the University of Nairobi has been operating without a leader. This follows a decision by Cabinet secretary for education to disband the institution’s council. He also rejected the institution’s appointment of a new vice-chancellor. Two court injunctions have followed. The first suspended the government’s action. The second restrained the new vice-chancellor of Kenya’s oldest university from taking any action that would create tension at the institution. The minister’s dramatic move highlights tensions between the government and universities. The government wants to control university affairs. Universities, meanwhile, want to safeguard their autonomy. In an ideal context, both the State and universities would recognise and respect each other’s responsibilities. The State should provide financial resources and create a climate conducive for university internal self-governance. For their part, universities should ensure accountability to the public through appropriate teaching, research and service. Where does academic freedom lie in this mix? University autonomy has been the subject of debate for centuries. It is now generally viewed as being central to academic freedom. This includes the right to have control over internal academic activities. Universities across the world have used autonomy to insulate themselves from direct control by governments and others trying to exert control. However, many governments have tried to exert pressure on universities to be more transparent and accountable for the public resources spent on them. It is a difficult balance to strike. Too much autonomy can lead to universities being unresponsive to the public. Too much accountability can destroy the academic values that universities ascribe to. The tensions at the University of Nairobi underline these issues. Kenya has around 60 universities; 37 public and 23 private. The state appoints chancellors and university councils for all public universities. This means that tensions over university autonomy are more intense in public institutions. Until 2002, the Kenyan Head of State was chancellor of all public universities. He appointed university councils, vice-chancellors and their deputies. This inevitably eroded institutional autonomy and compromised academic freedom. After 2003 university councils took over the role. Councils advertised, vetted, conducted interviews and short-listed candidates. The final recommendation of vice-chancellor or deputy was sent to the Cabinet secretary of
education for appointment. During this period universities were (financially healthy). Most were generating income from, among other things, commercialisation of academic services. This income began to surpass government financial support. Read more [here](#).

6. **Standard Digital**

**Reluctant Vice Chancellors (VCs) approve University merger plans (Kenya)**

Vice chancellors yesterday reluctantly ratified the amended universities regulations that included merger clauses, even as they proposed amendments to the document. Sources in the meeting chaired by Education Cabinet Secretary George Magoha said VCs said the merger question is well addressed in the Universities Act and proposed that the process be conducted in line with existing laws. It also emerged that VCs questioned what the optimal number of universities needed in Kenya was against the provision that each county gets a university. The VCs argued that issues of quality in the institutions of higher learning are well-documented in the existing laws. “We felt that universities should be funded adequately and allowed to run. Those that will not be popular will fall by the wayside. Merging universities may not be the main solution to the problems facing universities,” said one of the VCs on the sidelines of the meeting. Currently, Kenya has 74 universities, with 31 of them being public and six public constituent colleges. There are also 18 private universities, five private constituent colleges and 14 institutions with Letters of Interim Authority. The emended universities regulations empowers a sponsor of an institution to make a merger or acquisition request to the Commission for University Education (CUE). The Ministry of Education would make the application for public universities as boards of trustees make for private institutions. The regulation will require CUE to consider the inspection report generated by an audit committee it shall institute and where satisfied, recommend to the Cabinet Secretary for merger or acquisition. The insertion of the merger clause in the universities regulations is a major win for Prof Magoha whose proposals to the reforms have faced opposition from VCs and unions. The plan to allow VCs to recommend which of their universities and constituent colleges should be merged or shut down in the grand reforms plan did not yield. Unions moved to court to stall the merger plan and the matter has been rested, despite the heat reforms generated from the ministry. Read more [here](#).

7. **Press News 24**

**TVET graduates have an increased chance of getting jobs. This is why (General)**

Gone are the days where having a university degree is the only way to get a job. A qualification from a traditional academic institution used to be an automatic entry into the workplace, but that is not the reality now. Graduates from Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, who possesses vocational skills through their chosen courses, now have increased chances of employment. TVET graduates have typically made up only a small fraction of youth who get absorbed into the labour market; To address and redress the qualification bias that for years has placed these graduates on the back burner; Most TVET colleges offer technical courses which are incredibly important in the industrial growth of any country; They have the necessary employability skills required to ensure productivity; and There is significant funding available for businesses to hire TVETs as part of their required work-experience at no cost to the business itself.
According to Statistics South Africa, unemployment among TVET graduates was sitting at 33% but only at 7% among university graduates. This has led government to play an active role in ensuring that the public and private sector utilise TVET graduates with N6 certificates. Offering up to R6000 monthly incentives to graduates, the higher education department has learnerships and internships available. The unemployment rate among the youth (graduates or not) is high and there is a vast skills shortage within the country that doesn’t help in the alleviation of unemployment across the board. TVET graduates can find some comfort in that there are jobs in the fields that they studied, which they can pursue.

Read more [here](#).