1. **University World News**

**All contact learning in universities suspended, students sent home (Africa)**

Face-to-face learning in all universities in Kenya will be suspended over the coronavirus disease from 20 March until further notice. The shutdown of universities, schools and other learning institutions across the country was ordered by President Uhuru Kenyatta on 16 March. The lockdown of all non-essential services in the country became inevitable, as the Ministry of Health on 16 March confirmed two more cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), taking the total tally as at 16 March to three. “To protect the students, learning in all schools has been suspended with immediate effect while universities and other tertiary institutions are to close by Friday,” said the president. The first case of COVID-19 in Kenya was reported on 12 March, after a 27 year-old female student tested positive for the coronavirus. According to Health Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe, the student had travelled into the country from Ohio in the United States via London to Nairobi on 5 March. Urging Kenyans not to panic, Kagwe said the student, as well as the other two patients, were in a stable condition at Kenyatta National Hospital. Even before the government had decided to suspend face-to-face learning in universities, Africa Nazarene University on 13 March suspended on-campus classes over coronavirus fears, after the first case was traced to Ongata Rongai, where the university is located. The student who tested positive for the virus had been staying in the area since her arrival in the country. “After careful consideration, the university has taken a cautionary decision to suspend on-campus classes in all our campuses,” said Vice-Chancellor Stanley Bhebhe in a statement. Read details [here](#).

Similar closure of Universities happened in Ghana and Senegal, see [link](#); South Africa and Namibia see [link](#); Rwanda, see [link](#) and Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Sudan see [link](#).

2. **University World News**

**More graduates, but what about skills and employment? (Africa)**

Tertiary education in Sub-Saharan Africa is confronting probably the biggest challenge it will ever face: building up the human capital of a skyrocketing youth population, according to Lucy Heady, knowledge director for Education Sub-Saharan Africa (ESSA). “Swathes of young people are leaving without the skills they need for work and the problem of graduate unemployment is rising,” she says. Founded in 2016, ESSA uses evidence to improve the tertiary education system, equipping young people in Sub-Saharan Africa with the skills for work. In an interview with University World News, Heady said the inability of the sub-region to expand teaching, research and infrastructure capacity, largely as a result of stagnant or reduced funding of the tertiary sector, has been “a major setback for the higher education and TVET [technical and vocational education and training] sectors for most countries”. Furthermore, she said the grading system within tertiary education is a challenge. “For many young people it is difficult to get high grades and enter tertiary education. Flexible learning and courses are not common, and the emphasis on the theoretical rather than practical does not suit many young people’s needs,” she said. “The lack of formal apprenticeship schemes and low availability of appropriate internships further exemplifies this challenge. Currently these training schemes sit largely in the informal sector, with diplomas and formal qualifications rarely awarded for apprenticeships.” Read more [here](#).
3. University World News

**University transformation at the crossroads (South Africa)**

Whatever transformation may mean to universities and their publics and the officials within the South African higher education system, somewhere in its intent is the advancement of social justice and human rights. The primary policy documents of the 1990s all have very strong formulations on this. As time went by, the watering down of these statements and its associated practices within the inner workings of state and public agencies and universities have been obvious; only flaring up as disoriented noise when crises, such as student protests, arise. The present clutter and chatter on ‘decolonisation’ in South African universities is a case in point. As we move from the National Plan for Higher Education of 2001 to the eagerly awaited adoption of the National Plan for Post School Education and Training, do not look for firmer articulations of social justice and human rights. You will be told that it is embedded, transversal, cross-cutting and intersecting. Ideally this should be true. But in the real world of South African universities, embedded strategies came to mean weak, tentative practices. As some universities in other parts of the world are waking up from their colonial slumber to study their connections to and gains from slavery, the South African higher education sector seems to be writing out the ideas of advancing social justice and human rights as antidotes to the legacy of ‘Apartheid’. Without doubt, higher education transformation represents complex challenges; and notable transformative strides have been made. Yet, even so, we need to reject the popular arguments that appear to steer the thinking and programmatic work of our public agencies around trade-offs between excellence and quality on the one hand, and social justice on the other; and between equity and development. Or, as some would have it, the trade-offs between social equity and knowledge production. Despite growing scholarly work and research reports that debunk these forms of logic, it has ruling currency within the dominant higher education policy and programmatic space. Why this is the case will be an illuminating study, which may well explain the post 1994 systemic re/racialisation of the university sector. But, let us be honest. Apart from putting a single coordinated system in place, strides in student access and some equity movements relating to university staff, the deep transformation around knowledge, pedagogy and institutional culture is eluding us; except for pockets of productive work in some of our universities. A new, emancipatory imagination for higher education looks like a bridge too far.

Read more [here](#).

4. University World News

**Universities align courses with new school curriculum (Uganda)**

A number of universities and institutions of higher learning in Uganda have started tweaking their programmes this year to include an element of skills acquisition after the Ministry of Education and Sports approved a more ‘competence-based’ curriculum for lower secondary education last October. Public universities including Kyambogo and Busitema have developed new standards and will only design and teach new programmes that incorporate technical and practical education. Makerere University’s Dr Muhammad Kiggundu, director for communications and international relations, said it will continue to prioritise disciplines that are relevant to societal needs and can give students “options” after they complete university. Vice-Chancellor of Busitema University Professor Paul Waako said the revised ‘O’ level (high school) curriculum was a long time coming.
“We [universities] have been challenged [for producing semi-skilled graduates]. But it has really been hard to produce skilled graduates out of students who have been fed on theory their entire education,” The new and more hands-on lower secondary level curriculum can only make work for universities a lot easier, he said. Waako said his university was experimenting with ways it can enhance its “practical programmes” because “we need to equip young people with relevant skills and competences so there is something they can do after they complete university”. He said his institution was investing in ICT infrastructure to produce more graduates who could engage in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Vice-Chancellor of Kyambogo University Professor Eli Katunguka said his institution had told its staff to include skills and competence components in any new programme. The university, Uganda’s second largest, is already prioritising fashion and design, leather technology and other hands-on and practical disciplines as well as traditional vocations such as education and architecture. “Universities across Africa are being asked to train students in practical education,” said Katunguka. “The new lower secondary curriculum can only feed into this bigger agenda.” The new curriculum has reduced examinable subjects at lower secondary from 32 to 20, retaining English language, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, physical education, geography and history, which are compulsory, as well as a number of vocational subjects.

5. **PeaceFM Online**

**Government to make Technical, Vocation Education And Training Free (Ghana)**

The District Chief Executive (DCE) of Ellembelle, Mr. Kwasi Bonzoh has announced that the government would soon make Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) free.

The move, he said, formed part of measures to increase the enrollment of students in TVET to produce the required manpower to accelerate national development. Mr. Bonzo dropped the hint at a sod-cutting ceremony on behalf of the Ministry of Education as part of the expansion and retooling of the Charlotte Dolphyne Vocational Training Institute at Sanzule in the Western Region. The one million-dollar project forms part of the Akufo-Addo-led government's commitment to upgrade all the thirty-five (35) Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in Ghana. The facility, which is being executed by the Sumec and P.C Education Africa Ventures, will comprise a state-of-the-art administration block, two classroom-two-storey building, three classroom-two-storey building, three workshops, 200 capacity two storey dormitory/hostel for boys and a 200 capacity storey dormitory for girls. The others are the rehabilitation of block laying concreting platform, rehabilitation of a catering block, and equipping all trades with modern tools and equipment. At a colourful ground-breaking ceremony at the forecourt of the school, Mr Bonzoh thanked the school authorities, students and residents for supporting the project and for promoting vocational education in the District. Mr Bonzoh noted that the school lacked infrastructural development and therefore commended the government for listening to the appeal of the people to upgrade the school. He said the government would also provide a 33-seater bus to the school and train the teachers to meet the current trends of TVET. He said the government would introduce oil and gas courses in the school to provide skills to the students to benefit the oil and gas industry.

Read more [here](#)
6. Devdiscourse

**AfDB, Association for Development of Education urge to equip youth with skills (Africa)**

The African Development Bank and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) have called for stronger links between technical and vocational education and training and industry to equip young people with the skills they need to boost technological advancement, trade, and growth in Africa. A Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector Scoping Study Workshop, financed through the Bank’s Japan Trust Fund, drew more than 50 delegates from 13 African countries, representing international organizations, academia, and the private sector, to the Bank’s headquarters in Abidjan on 13 and 14 February 2020. The continent has made substantial progress in economic development. However, skills mismatch, weak industry linkages, resource constraints, and poor implementation of policies are making it difficult to sufficiently respond to the current and future industry needs. "Quality skills development for youth employability will help Africa leapfrog and accelerate its path towards inclusive and sustainable development," the Bank’s Acting Director for Human Capital, Youth and Skills Development, Pierre-Justin Kouka, told participants during the opening session. The workshop’s main objective was to share the findings of a TVET scoping study that researched the TVET landscape in Africa and its linkages with the private sector. Organizers also set the stage to discuss the design of a TVET mapping study with the aim of providing an evidence-based picture of TVET in Africa and its links with industry to guide interventions and investments by the African Development Bank and other stakeholders. Workshop attendees emphasized the need for targeted investments in skills and training, with proper alignment to Africa’s priority areas of development. They agreed that a more in-depth study was needed to help ensure holistic and well-informed interventions. "The findings of the preliminary scoping study show that there are gaps in skills development for employability in Africa. A number of studies have been undertaken in the past; however, there is a need to dive deep into the TVET ecosystem and derive evidence-based priority areas of skills development," Hendrina C. Doroba, the Bank’s Manager for the Education and Skills Development Division, said during the workshop. Read more here.

7. Kenya News

**East African Community to Harmonize TVET curriculum (East Africa)**

Experts from Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Authorities from three EAC countries have started a process of coming up with a harmonized curriculum for the region. The harmonization supported by the East Africa Skills for Transformation and Regional Integration Project (EASTRIP) funded by World bank and is spearheaded by Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia to improve the quality of TVET programmes among member states and promote regional integration. Speaking to KNA during the meeting in Nairobi, Director Technical Education at the Ministry of Education Tom Mulati said harmonization of skills through the curriculum will target critical sector like the manufacturing, transport, energy, ICT and Blue economy. “we are harmonizing the qualifications across the region, harmonizing the curriculum and also harmonizing the occupational standards across the region and this will help the TVET institutions and graduates be able to have greater mobility across the region in terms of employability and even in terms of training”, he said. Mulati explained that once the curriculums are harmonized, the examinations and mode of assessment will also be harmonized making it easy for the region.
“The outcome of the harmonized curriculum, occupational standards and harmonized qualification frameworks will see the level of qualifications in Kenya equal to those in Ethiopia and also Tanzania”, he said. The Director further said that they are involving the industry in the process in order to get it right in terms of when the graduates complete their education they are able to get into the industry whether self or gainful employment in an easier way. Mulati confirmed that the Inter Council University of East Africa (IUCEA) will be spearheading the process doing all the baseline surveys and information gathering. In Kenya institutions that have been earmarked in starting off the project are the Meru National polytechnic, Kenya Coast national polytechnic, Kenya institute of building and highways training and Kisumu national polytechnic. Deputy Executive Secretary of IUCEA, Mike Kuria said their aim is to major on three things namely improve access for education especially for women at the technical level who in this field representation is quite low, improve the quality of education and also employability. “The population in the country stands to around 47 million people and 60 percent of the people are below 25 years of age and employment rate among those people is very high and this is why this project is trying equip the students with the right skills so that they are able to find employment and hopefully we can reduce employability through giving students skills that are relevant for the labour market”, he said. The project through regional integration Kuria will see students be able to move from move from one country to the other and their qualifications accepted because what currently there is so much imbalance of skills in the different countries.

Read more [here](#)

8. MyJoyonline News

**2019 Global Food Security Index: Ghana places 3rd in Africa (Ghana)**

The Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) in its 2019 Global Food Security Index (GFSI) ranked Ghana 59th out of 113 countries in its 2019 index report. This ranking falls against the 73rd ranking out of 113 countries in 2018. The total performance score improved from 50.9 per cent in 2018 to 68.2 per cent in 2019 – representing 0.3 per cent improvement. The figures, derived from the annual baseline model, indicates the country recorded key strengths in the presence and quality of food safety net programs as the planting for food and jobs initiative (scored 100 per cent), Change in average food costs (97 per cent), food safety (81.2 per cent), urban absorption capacity (91.2 per cent), volatility of agricultural production (95.5 per cent). This places Ghana third-best in sub-Saharan Africa with South Africa and Botswana scoring first and second respectively in 2019. When it comes to food availability, Ghana placed second to South Africa with a score of 61.7 per cent. Meanwhile, the EIU has cited “high expenditure on agriculture research and development as well as a low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita as key challenges the government must consider.

Ghana’s impressive performance follows increased production and high yields of some foodstuffs like maize, rice, sorghum, groundnuts, soya bean, cowpea, cassava and plantain, he said, have led to a decrease in the wholesale prices in market centres in major food-producing areas – all under the Planting for food and jobs programme. The Global Food Security Index considers the core issues of affordability, availability, and quality across a set of 113 countries. The index is a dynamic quantitative and qualitative benchmarking model, constructed from 34 unique indicators, that measures these drivers of food security across both developing and developed countries.
This index is the first to examine food security comprehensively across the three internationally established dimensions. Moreover, the study looks beyond hunger to the underlying factors affecting food insecurity. The GFSI now includes an adjustment factor on natural resources and resilience. This category assesses a country’s exposure to the impacts of a changing climate; its susceptibility to natural resource risks; and how the country is adapting to these risks.

Read more here

ScienceMag
‘A ticking time bomb’: Scientists worry about coronavirus spread in Africa (Africa)
ate on Sunday evening, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, in a televised address to the nation, declared that COVID-19, the respiratory disease spreading globally, had become a “national disaster.” The declaration allows his government to access special funding and instigate harsh regulations to combat the viral outbreak. “Never before in the history of our democracy have we been confronted by such a severe situation,” Ramaphosa said before announcing a raft of measures to curb the virus’ spread, including school closures, travel restrictions, and bans on large gatherings.

So far, the official numbers seemed to suggest that sub-Saharan Africa, home to more than 1 billion people, had been lucky. The interactive map of reported COVID-19 cases run by Johns Hopkins University shows big red blobs almost everywhere—except sub-Saharan Africa. But now the numbers are rising quickly. South Africa, which had its first case 10 days ago, now has 61. According to Ramaphosa, the virus has begun spreading inside the country. And just yesterday, Rwanda, Equatorial Guinea, and Namibia all reported their first cases, bringing the number of affected countries to 23. Some scientists believe COVID-19 is circulating silently in other countries as well. “My concern is that we have this ticking time bomb,” says Bruce Bassett, a data scientist at the University of Cape Town who has been tracking COVID-19 data since January.

And although Africa’s handling of the pandemic has received scant global attention so far, experts worry the virus may ravage countries with weak health systems and a population disproportionately affected by HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and other infectious diseases. “Social distancing” will be hard to do in the continent’s overcrowded cities and slums. “We really have no idea how COVID-19 will behave in Africa,” says pediatrician and HIV researcher Glenda Gray, president of the South African Medical Research Council. Last month, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who is Ethiopian, said his “biggest concern” was COVID-19 spreading in countries with weak health systems.

Read more here

Note to Editors/PROs:
To share news/events about your Universities, contact;

Name: Maureen Agena
Corporate Communication
Email: communications@ruforum.org
Advocacy Officer