Media Monitoring: Extract of Press News on Higher Education in Africa

1. **University World News**

Rethinking strategic planning in African universities (Africa)

The vast majority of African tertiary education institutions, particularly universities, have strategic plans in place. Interestingly, African public universities display their strategic plans on their websites if they have one. While there is no universally accepted definition of a strategic plan, it is the product of top management echelons' articulating the long-term direction of the institution and a roadmap of how to reach it. That includes setting goals, indicating which products or services to focus on and how resources are to be deployed to attain those goals. Proponents assert that a strategic plan is needed when institutions, such as African universities, are facing difficult challenges posed by their external environment, including dwindling and delayed government funding, competition from other institutions and decreasing student enrolment.

Above all, proponents state that a strategic plan provides an institution with a rudder for navigating in the complex sea of higher education instead of being blown in different directions by the winds of circumstances and events. While there is truth in these assertions, they may not be true for all institutions, bearing in mind national cultural context, access to financial resources, organisational leadership or conceptualisation of the nature of educational institutions. Going back to its original roots, strategy planning was borrowed by business organisations from military science and competitive sports where its sole purpose is to outmanoeuvre and defeat an enemy or opponent. How is strategy for an institution conceptualised or perceived in the African cultural context? This is a critical question that many proponents of institutional strategic planning have failed to explore. As an imported management technique from Europe and North America, the notion of the strategic plan was an imposition on African universities in the early 1990s by the World Bank, with tacit support from donor countries. The original purposes of a strategic plan, and for that matter, strategic planning are twofold. First, the World Bank and its sponsored Working Group on Higher Education believed that a strategic plan would be used by African universities as a guideline for funding negotiations with their governments and donors. Second, it is posited that a strategic plan would help African universities to negotiate a new relationship with their governments focused on greater institutional autonomy. The desired outcome is for African governments to shift from state control to state supervision of their public universities.

Read more **here**

2. **World Economic Forum**

How can Africa prepare its education system for the post-COVID world? (Africa)

Innovation in education has become a major priority due to COVID-19, The recent technological influx in Africa needs to be capitalized upon by the education sector, which has been hit hard by the pandemic,African governments need to invest in free, high-quality online education for all Africans. Lindiwe Matlali is one of the Schwab Foundation's Social Innovators of the Year 2020. This year, Kenya declared that its 2020 school year was considered lost and primary and secondary school pupils would return to class in January. Indeed, COVID-19 has left 250 million children in primary and secondary schools in Africa alone out of school. Due to the pandemic, the topic of innovation in education has never been so crucial. While most developed countries moved their classes online with ease, many developing countries have been found wanting, due to a lack of infrastructure and the high cost of data. South Africa is ranked as one of the countries with the most expensive data in the world, resulting in challenges with implementing digital learning, particularly in rural areas. Discussions on the matter are urgently required on an Africa-wide level.

On 30 March 2020, three days after President Cyril Ramaphosa announced South Africa's national lockdown, Africa Teen Geeks (ATG) launched the STEM Digital Lockdown school in partnership with the Department of Basic Education. It has reached over 500,000 learners across the country through the MsZora platform – an artificial-intelligence based educational platform offering free live classes by qualified teachers. It is available to all South Africans with access to a computer and internet. Classes are recorded and shared on social media sites such as YouTube for future reference. And yet if South Africa has over 12 million learners in its basic education system, how is it possible that only 500,000 children were able to access these classes? Inequality is the answer. While online learning is playing a critical role in remote learning during the coronavirus pandemic, the implications of pivoting to online instructions are devastating for the poor.
Read more **here**

3. **University World News**
Translating research findings into policy and practice (Africa)
Researchers in higher institutions of learning are being challenged to answer the important question – "So what?" Show me how your research is impacting people's lives, families, communities, nations, and the world. Most governments, foundations, and non-government institutions, business and industry which provide funding for research and development envision the idea of creating a nationally and globally competitive education, training, research, and innovation system for both human and sustainable development. The United Nations Development Programme defines human development as a process of enlarging the range of people's choice by increasing their opportunities for education, healthcare, income and employment, and covering the full range of human choices from a sound physical environment to socioeconomic, education, health, and political systems. And sustainable development refers to a multidimensional process defined by Michael Todaro as involving the reorganisation and reorientation of entire economic and social systems. The process aims at meeting human development goals such as longevity, increased purchasing power and increased adult literacy rates, while at the same time sustaining the ability of the natural systems to provide natural resources and ecosystem services on which the economy, people and society depend, now and in future. In Africa and the world over, universities are responsible for research, scholarship and innovation and are depended upon to serve as agents for discovery, innovation, adoption and dissemination of knowledge generated. A major challenge that many researchers engaged in impactful research face is how to translate their seminal research findings into policy and practice. The standard research process is to design and conduct quality research, then to disseminate findings through peer-reviewed conference presentations and peer-reviewed publications. The only limitation is that most times, the leaders, policy-makers, and practitioners are rarely at these conferences and may never read the peer-reviewed articles published in top tier journals in the field. Some innovative researchers now prepare policy briefs, and distribute them to funders, leaders and policy implementers in government agencies, for-profit and not-for-profit agencies. In addition, blogs, podcasts and social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn are being used to communicate pertinent research findings instantly. While these are positive steps, however, they do not guarantee research policy and practice adoption.
Read more **here**

4. **Daily Maverick**

Universities and the private sector must put their heads together to rebuild the South African economy (South Africa)

It is well known that the South African economy was in deep trouble before the Covid-19 pandemic, with unsustainable levels of debt, a growing budget deficit and an 8% projected contraction of the economy post the pandemic. There is a clear realisation that the economy needs a recovery plan, with the significant expansion of productive employment opportunities for South Africans. In fact, the Social Partners' Economic Recovery Plan, coordinated by Nedlac, was developed to increase investor, consumer and public confidence, and to turn the economy around in the short and medium term. The plan provides specific interventions and, although the actions as specified are not new, it argues for "significant convergence among the Nedlac partners on what needs to be done to set our economy on a new accelerated, inclusive and transformative growth trajectory". President Cyril Ramaphosa will present the plan to Parliament this week. The private sector, industry and business are key components of the economy, primarily driven by manufacturing, financial services, transport, mining, agriculture and tourism. Although I believe that government can and should contribute to economic growth, the private sector, business and industry are the components that will generate real growth in the economy. Business for South Africa (B4SA) has pledged its commitment to work with the social partners to implement these action steps – and it needs to be emphasised that these interventions are not new! However, the dilemma lies in the implementation of these actions in terms of inaction, urgency and effectiveness. Whether it is to address the energy crisis (more specifically, the security of energy supply), local manufacturing, supporting the recovery and growth of tourism, and investment in the mining, agriculture and infrastructure sectors, adversarial relationships, egos and political rhetoric need to be replaced by collaboration, co-creation and action. It is clear that the political, business and societal spheres do not need more workshops, conversations, policies or plans – these are all available and known. We need to build a capable state (which includes the architecture of the SOEs) and introduce appropriate labour reform. Corruption across all spheres of government, business and social partners is unacceptable and needs to be decisively addressed, policy and regulatory certainty and proper fiscal reform are required.

Why is it then so difficult to implement these if all stakeholders are in agreement, even if everyone is aware that lives and livelihoods are threatened every minute when these actions are not implemented? Is it the lack of political will, or lack of political leadership?

Read more **here**

5. **University World News**

Research networks challenged by COVID-19 (Africa)

The coronavirus pandemic has created an opportunity for researchers to be more innovative in the way they design and conduct research. Travel restrictions as well as a ban on field and laboratory research, the result of stay-at-home orders and social distancing guidelines, have left many research projects lagging behind, suspended or postponed. This has prompted researchers to come up with creative plans to complete the work or to conduct new research, said Professor Adebola Omowunmi Oyedeji, a professor of organic chemistry at Walter Sisulu University in South Africa. She was part of a panel discussion at the virtual conference of the International Education Association of South Africa and the African Network for Internationalization of Education on 1-2 October titled "Innovation and resilience in higher education internationalisation in an era of COVID-19 and beyond." Research, like all aspects of higher education, has also been affected by COVID-19. Oyedeji said the lockdown situation also demanded that researchers be more imaginative in the way they connected with other scientists, and on how to get new collaborators and sustain existing ones. Researchers should have strategies to guarantee continuity of their work during this period and beyond because mobility would be an issue even after COVID-19, Oyedeji added.

"Researchers need to network at all times, not just in conferences but also online. They have a duty to share knowledge, expertise and content with other people online," she argued. They also needed to identify weaknesses in infrastructure in their universities to be able to know what kind of research could be conducted rapidly through the use of available technologies, she said. According to Ylva Rodny-Gumede, head of internationalisation and professor in the School of Communication at the University of Johannesburg, said the switch to online education has helped and triggered innovations in novel ways. It has led to the building of new "partnerships in space", she said. The switch could also lead to universities finding new and better ways of reaching international students and doing so in a more affordable manner, she added. While budget cuts could hit universities post-COVID-19, internationalisation should still thrive, aided through online learning. This is because foreign students could afford fees because their reduced physical mobility would save on costs, Rodny-Gumede observed.
Read more **here**

6. **Devdis Course**
Malawi President Chakwera expresses concern over gender inequality in teaching profession (Malawi)
President of Malawi, Lazarus Chakwera has expressed his concern over gender inequality in the teaching profession and the low number of female teachers in rural areas. Chakwera had also made the remarks in his address on Sunday for the International Teachers Day which is commemorated on October 5. According to him, the problem of gender inequality in the teaching workforce should be addressed as it is a matter of great concern. Chakwera said there is a pattern of decrease from lower to higher education levels in the representation of female teachers. "The disparity is also noted between the urban and rural schools. These disparities are problematic. For instance, the absence of female teachers has the unintended effect of depriving girls in rural communities of role models that can challenge deep-rooted gender stereotypes," said Chakwera. His remarks came two days after gender activists demonstrated against his administration of low representation of women in parastatal boards. In his speech on Sunday, the Malawi leader directed the Ministry of Education to fast track the establishment of the Teacher's council which will ensure that the best practice about teaching is replete with new ideas and inspirational leadership.
Read more **here**

7. **University World News**
Publish, profit, predate, perish and peer review (South Africa)
From the COVID-19 'infodemic', dubious practices from peer reviewers to academics and predatory publishers, the South African Journal of Science's latest edition sets out to detail the measures in place to mitigate against 'bad, fast science' and ensure the integrity of critical academic citizenhood. The authors are diverse in their opinions but forward a range of generally appreciative perspectives on the importance (and often thankless task) of the peer reviewer. It also exposes, directly and indirectly, a series of practices that paint a sometimes nefarious picture of the publishing academic. Crowd authoring, the gaming of the system, predatory publishing, unethical and racist research, and the ever-absent reviewer are all examples of what goes on behind the scenes in academic publishing. And as in the 'mirror-verse' to Fox News, publishing has given rise to what the Lancet Infectious Diseases terms as the 'COVID-19 infodemic', where individuals re-imagine themselves as COVID specialists and put out research that is ill-conceived, riddled with questionable assumptions, or simply wrong. The peer review process is a relatively recent introduction into the global research process. As Professor Jane Carruthers points out in her summary commentary, "Nature began external peer review only in 1973, and the majority of science journals did so during the 1970s and 1980s. "Editorial judgment was the norm" prior to this. Ironically for Carruthers, the rise of the peer reviewer is precisely what gave rise to the "publish or perish" phenomenon that bedevils academia to this day.

The peer reviewer is situated between the scholarly work and the public. In an ideal world he or she is meant to ensure that the written piece has intrinsic merit, is of a certain quality, advances knowledge within the field or, as is the case with COVID-19, provides an urgent response to a pressing, global problem. This person is a peer who is respected in the same or related discipline and can act as an arbiter of value, while offering valuable suggestions and comments that can increase the quality of the final piece. Dr Andy Carolin, a senior lecturer at the University of Johannesburg, is particularly experienced in the peer review process and describes the individuals that can occupy this space. He has even developed a taxonomy of sorts, ranging from the 'monster' (the one who obstructs output); the 'gatekeeper' (guarding the disciplinary domain in a dogmatic mode of thinking); and the 'desirable peer reviewer' who fits into the role of becoming an indirect contributor by making constructive suggestions on a manuscript.

Read more **here**

8. **University World News**

Internationalisation now a deliberate undertaking (Ethiopia)

The launch of an international higher education (IHE) policy by the Ethiopian Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE) is expected to support focused internationalisation efforts in the next few years. MoSHE's decision to develop a national policy on international higher education is part of reforms aimed at transforming the sector. Individual institutions are encouraged to partake and urgently design their own internationalisation policies and strategies in line with the broader directions set in the national policy. Ethiopia's international higher education policy can be regarded as a remarkable development to encourage informed and planned moves in all spheres of the internationalisation arena. It can also serve as an example for other countries in the developing world that wish to emulate the policy development process. Internationalisation efforts have, for too long, been fragmented and occurred in the absence of clear national and institutional directions. Hence the need for nationwide policy formulation on the internationalisation of higher education has been in discussion for quite some time. Notwithstanding its limitations and paradoxes, internationalisation continues to be a central aspect of higher education that many countries across the globe cannot afford to ignore. Many systems and institutions accordingly recognise the critical impact of internationalisation on shaping their missions, strategic planning and operational practices and entertain it both as a concept and an operational agenda. Successful internationalisation efforts are most often accompanied by carefully crafted policies and strategies at national, sectoral and institutional levels. However, contrary to what is often thought, the internationalisation of higher education as a coordinated engagement embodying policies, strategies and organised practices is a phenomenon that has only recently started to spread across the globe. The situation is more pronounced in developing countries where, despite the increasing interest in becoming part of the global movement toward the internationalisation of higher education, few are said to be guided by policies and strategies developed at national and institutional level. International higher education in Ethiopia has a long history. Its growth and development have been similar to internationalisation patterns globally and particularly in developing countries. The roots of internationalisation in Ethiopia can be traced back to the arrival of missionaries in the country in the nineteenth century.

Read more **here**

9. **University World News**

Morocco and Tunisia form alliance to tackle shared challenges (Morocco/Tunisia)

Morocco and Tunisia have unveiled a US$2.16 million plan to set up joint laboratories, enhance networking between universities in the two countries, mutually recognise degrees aimed at enhancing student and academic mobility and encourage doctoral theses emanating from joint supervision by the partner institutions. The plan was announced by the Moroccan and Tunisian ministries of higher education and scientific research on 29 September. It is to include 30 research projects in the fields of health, renewable energy and electricity, energy efficiency, water, the environment and climate change, human and social sciences, artificial intelligence and big data. "It seems like an important initiative to promote binational academic relations," former Fulbright scholar to Morocco Elizabeth Buckner, an assistant professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, Canada, "The joint Morocco-Tunisia higher education initiative is a major leap forward to establish a Maghreb education and research area," said Magdi Tawfik Abdelhamid, professor of agricultural biotechnology at Cairo's National Research Centre in Egypt. Besides Tunisia and Morocco, the Arab Maghreb countries in North Africa also include Algeria, Libya and Mauritania. According to Abdelhamid, the plan would improve quality and strengthen the mobility of students and scientists as well as bolster access to excellence via facilities and infrastructure for researchers along with the free flow of knowledge and technology. He added that the initiative would promote higher education to help achieve sustainable development goals as Moroccan and Tunisian universities could also set up a new model for virtual and physical inter-university campuses. This would make it possible to pool their expertise, platforms and resources for integration of sustainable development goals in academic and professional development and deliver joint curricula or modules covering various sustainability science disciplines. Abdelhamid stated that the plan would help to transform Moroccan and Tunisian higher education sectors through multidisciplinary education, research and entrepreneurship for providing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for a new generation of graduates.

Read more **here**

10. **University World News**

Arab states adopt plan to raise an 'enlightened' generation (North Africa)

The 22 member states of the Arab League, which includes 12 Northern African countries, have adopted an education development framework aimed at establishing high-quality Arab education systems that are at the forefront of higher education and scientific research and new information and communication technologies. The framework was approved on 23 September during a virtual meeting of Arab education ministers. The framework was drawn up by the Arab Parliament in cooperation with UNESCO, the Morocco-based Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the Tunisia-based Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, the Union of Arab universities, the Sudan-based Federation of Arab Scientific Research Councils, and the Egypt-based Social Affairs Sector of the League of Arab States. Underlining the need for the framework, Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said at the meeting: "Education in its traditional forms is no longer sufficient. Rather, good education must be accompanied by continuous training and the strengthening of the ability to self-learn … This is what the new economic and technological reality imposes on us, with all its challenges and transformations." Mishaal bin Fahm Al-Salami, president of the Arab Parliament, echoed this sentiment when he said: "Education reform in the Arab world is a necessity for survival, and is not an intellectual or elitist luxury. It is one of the basic pillars of Arab national security and the cornerstone for raising an informed and enlightened Arab generation." The framework calls for establishing an educational environment that helps in critical thinking and the ability to solve problems and the development of educational curricula that develop the scientific and creative capabilities of students

and refine their skills. It also calls for the development of educational processes in order to better meet the requirements of the labour market and sustainable development, as well as ensuring compulsory and free education in all stages. In addition, it aims to promote free and independent universities and scientific research centres and also calls for the development of distance education in the Arab world. The framework will be submitted to Arab leaders for adoption and approval at the next Arab Summit, after which it is to be developed into programmes, projects and implementation plans by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO).

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