

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

### 1. University World News

#### Funders predict changes to international postgraduate study (Africa)

With the available international funding for doctoral training and research in Africa set to decline after COVID-19, experts are foreseeing a range of changes in how students conduct their postgraduate studies, with blended and sandwich options expected to be the new norm. Funding changes may also determine where African students go for their postgraduate studies in future. Instead of going abroad, students could opt for universities on the continent to save money. Students with scholarships could also be approaching their studies differently. They may meet their foreign supervisors virtually for a few months, then spend only a few months on face-to-face learning. In other cases, students will study abroad for a period and return to Africa to conduct research and write their theses. These alternatives are expected to replace the popular mode of study whereby many students spend the entire period of training in foreign universities doing both coursework and research. These changes to postgraduate study and the funding thereof were discussed during a webinar hosted by the African Population and Health Research Center in conjunction with the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa. Maria Teresa Bejarano of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) said the arrangement (of combining virtual and contact time) will ensure that elements associated with international training were not completely lost. “As a funder, SIDA is in favour of the sandwich approach to doctoral and postdoctoral programmes. We need to keep a bit of both mobility and exposure no matter the cost,” she told the webinar titled “Funding Postdoctoral Training and Research Capacity Strengthening in Africa”. It was important, she said, that fellows got mentorship both at home and abroad, noting that it was crucial to expose them to different types of “life experiences”. She was emphatic that despite the anticipated cuts in funding, “mobility out of university or home country cannot be replaced by virtual learning”. She said that SIDA would continue supporting postdoctoral education within Africa’s higher education system, as well as building the capacity for scientific research. “Supporting PhD training in Africa is certainly one way of improving higher education in Africa,” she reiterated. Andrea Johnson, the head of Higher Education and Research in Africa and Peacebuilding in Africa at the Carnegie Corporation of New York said fellows got mentorship both at home and abroad, noting that to attract funding, universities needed to design their models for training based on their individual priorities to win limited available funding.

Read more [here](#)

### 2. Face2Face Africa

#### For the first time in 148 yrs, University of South Africa appoints its first woman vice-chancellor (South Africa)

Professor Puleng LenkaBula has just made history as the first woman principal and vice-chancellor of the University of South Africa (UNISA) in the school’s 148-year history. According to a statement by the University, the appointment was a unanimous decision made by the Council of the University. Professor LenkaBula is the vice-rector of institutional change, student affairs and community engagement at the University of the Free State and she will assume her new office in January 2021. She has broad administrative experience in higher education. Before she became vice-rector, she was the dean of

students at WITS University and a member of the Vice Chancellor's Office (VCO) and the Senior Executive Team. This is not her first position in UNISA but the highest to date. She was once a well-admired dean of students at the school among other managerial positions at different institutions.

LenkaBula has a Doctorate (2006-20077) in Ethics (Theology and Philosophy) with specialization in Ethics of the Economy, Ecology and Politics from the University of South Africa. She graduated from St Andrew's College at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada, in 1995 with a master's degree with specialization in Social Ethics. For her Bachelor of Education, she graduated with three majors in English, Theology, and Education, from the National University of Lesotho. The new vice-chancellor-elect is also a published author and a highly respected scholar who serves on the boards of various local ecumenical and academic formations, including the Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa (CODESRIA). Chairperson of the UNISA Council, Sakhi Simelane, praised Professor LenkaBula in a statement, referring to her as the right fit for the job. The council also wants to diversify its workforce to reflect the current demographics of South Africa and lend its voice to the "gender empowerment wave sweeping the country." "In Professor LenkaBula, we have appointed the right caliber of leader; who is student-centred and shares our institutional vision on decoloniality and transformation, knowledge-production, innovation and advancing the socio-economic development of South Africa, Africa and the world, in particular for the benefit of Africa."

Read more [here](#)

### 3. The Herald

#### **Project Strengthens Agricultural Education, Extension, and Research (Zimbabwe)**

The Zimbabwe Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Services (ZAKIS) project, which is part of the broader European Union-funded Zimbabwe Agricultural Growth Programme (ZAGP), has since its launch in 2018, made some significant contributions to strengthening the delivery of agricultural education, extension, and research services in the country. In the last two decades, these services had become insufficient for the needs of farmers. This was caused by limited funding, inadequate skills, and the absence of a robust and clear policy framework that harmonizes the dissemination of agricultural knowledge and information to farmers. In an interview recently, ZAKIS head of project Mr Waddilove Sansole unpacked the intervention and highlighted some of its achievements so far. "ZAKIS is a Government initiative whose activities are led by the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, and Rural Resettlement. It is supported by a consortium of local and international agricultural specialist NGOs that include Welthungerhilfe, ICRISAT, Community Technology Development Organisation, and Sustainable Agriculture Technology," said Mr Sansole. He said that ZAKIS responds to pillar II of the National Agriculture Policy Framework (2019-2030) whose thrust is on increasing investment in agricultural research and development, education, and extension systems, as well as in innovations; including climate and business-smart technology. "We are therefore working to build the capacity of these Government service providers so that they can better deliver their mandate which is to effectively address farmer needs and establish a market-oriented agricultural sector," he said. Agricultural Centres of Excellence (ACEs) which have been established at Chibero Agricultural College and Matopos Research Institute are the vital hubs for meeting the ZAKIS objective. These are supported by the District Agricultural Centres of Excellence (DACEs) that have been set up at Insiza, Mhondoro-Ngezi, Matobo, and Chegutu.

Read more [here](#)

#### **4. University World News**

##### **What it takes for women to succeed – or not – in science in Africa (Africa)**

Women are 49.6% of the world's population. An estimated 70% of the health and social care workforce are women; they deliver care to around five billion people. Women are also at the frontline of the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic – as health care givers, researchers, scientists and policy-makers. There is a well recognised gender disparity in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. This prompted the Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA) to conduct a study on factors contributing to or inhibiting women's careers in these key fields in Africa. The study highlighted the numerous factors that contribute to or hinder women's success in these fields. It also explored how these reinforce each other. Understanding what these factors are, and how they operate, is vital to devising the multi-pronged approach that's necessary for tackling these challenges. This is the first review of its kind that gives an African perspective of the challenges that women in these fields face. They are by no means unique to Africa. What we do find significant is the stronger influence in Africa of role models, mentoring and family support in moving women along the trajectory of a career in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Our study targeted research institutions within Africa's eight regional economic communities recognised by the African Union. Particular focus was placed on institutions that the African Academy of Sciences works with and their networks with other programmes that support women in research. Respondents included women working in or studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Policy experts in Africa were also included. Over 1,200 emails were sent out to several institutions and 415 women scientists registered for the online survey. Of these, 396 (95.4%) completed the questionnaire that identified factors contributing to or inhibiting women's careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in Africa. It specifically identified the challenges and opportunities that respondents face or have faced in their own careers. A face-to-face validation workshop was held with a subset of women scientists. The study showed that women's success in these key fields was influenced by individual, family, societal and work environment factors. These included personal capabilities and academic preparation. Access to funding and having women role models also emerged as factors. Patriarchal attitudes at a macro level were most significant. For women already working in these areas, the work environment and recruitment process, promotion and gender relations were major influences. Policies to address the gender gap were reported to exist but rarely implemented.

Read more [here](#)

#### **5. The Star**

##### **Are university degrees useless to job seekers? (Kenya)**

How useful is a university degree in helping graduates secure meaningful, financially independent lives? The large number of unemployed graduates is leading many to question the utility of university education, but is the skepticism justified? The frustration of joblessness is shared by parents and guardians who sacrificed hundreds of thousands of shillings for their young people's university education. Tensions arise in the family when the graduates are accused of not doing enough to get a job. Universities are also getting bashed for unemployment among their graduates, with claims mostly from politicians that current university degrees are not relevant to the job market. Deputy President William Ruto stoked that controversy several times in the past decade, declaring that arts and social science degrees are not as useful as science-based courses. In 2017, the Deputy President said the market was saturated with arts and social science university graduates, but there weren't enough

middle-level graduates with technical skills in applied sciences, engineering and technology. He made similar remarks in 2011, when he was Minister for Education in the Grand Coalition Government. In neighbouring Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni, in his typically blunt style, told Ugandans not to take “useless degrees”. The degrees he had in mind were arts-based courses. Museveni said the degrees “have not added much value to the Ugandan economy”. Still within East Africa, a Member of the Tanzanian Parliament caused a stir when he said a university degree is not worth the investment because it cannot be used as security for a loan during family emergencies. “Our young people leave home at the age of 18; they come back at the age of 25 with a degree,” he said. “The graduates don't want to farm, they don't want to herd cattle, they sit at home waiting for jobs. The uneducated are more useful to society because they can do any work!” In 2019, the Ministry of Education proposed scrapping some degree courses offered by Kenyan universities because the courses were no longer attractive to employers. The Ministry said too many universities were offering the same type of courses, duplicating each other's efforts and saturating the job market.

Read more [here](#)

## 6. University World News

### **Balancing the books, creating sustainability beyond COVID-19 (Southern Africa)**

As the COVID-19 pandemic has had a ravaging and unprecedented impact on educational systems across the world, African higher education institutions are also faced with the morbid task of re-evaluating their existing revenue models to ensure financial sustainability. From a decrease in state-funded budgets to cuts in third stream income from donors and alumni, and the retention of students coupled with a massive decrease in tuition payments, African universities must explore innovative ways to meet costs and remain relevant as institutions of knowledge and research. According to Martin Oosthuizen, the executive director of the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA), the ramifications of the pandemic for higher education budgets will be felt for many years to come, and will continue to affect the ability of education ministries to provide the required financial support critical for the sustainable development of universities. Before the pandemic, most South African universities were already facing sustainability challenges due to reduced budget allocations by the state, student protests calling for the removal of fees, and an unstable currency leading to economic decline. According to the South African government's October budget policy statement, higher education is also among the departments forced to help fund the implementation of the rescue plan for state airline SAA, losing ZAR1.13 billion (US\$70 million) from its budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year to help prop up the ailing state-owned enterprise, Business Day reported. A recent paper by University of Pretoria experts highlighted possible scenarios that might result from the pandemic, and how financial security was a common denominator in determining the future of education systems in Africa. “Uncertain Times: Re-imagining universities for new sustainable futures”, authored by Gerald Wangenge-Ouma and Tawana Kupe, vice-chancellor of the University of Pretoria, notes the complexities facing higher education institutions in Africa, the socio-economic context of poverty and inequality, and how this ultimately plays a limiting factor in enhancing the intellectual and social development of students. In the worst-case scenario (“Cry South Africa”) there would be economic collapse coupled with a deepening recession. Public funding for universities would decline, tuition fees would be frozen, and student retention as well as debts would increase. Ultimately, universities would lose their value as institutions of knowledge and transformation.

Read more [here](#)

## 7. CGTN Africa

### **African scientists pledge to support sustainability agenda (Africa)**

Scientists drawn from the Sub-Saharan African region on Saturday pledged support for evidence-based policy-making aimed at advancing sustainable development in the continent. The scientists in a communique released in Nairobi at the end of a two-day virtual summit said that strategic application of research and data is key to tackling poverty, food insecurity, disease and climatic shocks in Africa. “It is critical for the scientific community to pay attention to the needs of decision-makers and produce evidence that meets their policy needs,” said Eliya Zulu, the executive director of Nairobi-based African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP). More than 400 African scientists attended the virtual conference dubbed “Strengthening the think-tank role of researchers in supporting government decision making for better development outcomes”. The scientists shared knowledge and best practices that can be harnessed to influence development of policies that advance inclusive growth, peace and stability in the continent. Zulu said the conference that was convened by AFIDEP and African Academy of Sciences (AAS) injected fresh impetus on data-driven policy interventions to address Africa’s under-development, health and ecological challenges. “This is the only way the research that we do can impact communities and transform lives,” said Zulu, adding that capacity building for African scientists is key to enhancing their contribution to the continent’s sustainability agenda. Tom Kariuki, director of programs at the AAS affiliated Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA) said that adequate funding for scientific research is key to transforming livelihoods amid COVID-19 related challenges. “We need to prioritize funding for scientific research on fields that promote sustainability in the continent. The new research priorities should address challenges that have arisen due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Kariuki. He said that access to research grants, training, mentorship and networking will enhance the capacity of African scientists to influence development outcomes in the continent.

Read more [here](#)

## 8. University World News

### **A call to study the gendered dimension of intellectual cultures (Africa)**

The research agenda and the contribution of African scientists have gained more traction over the past decade as universities renew and rediscover their research mission. While this renewed focus on research is to be applauded, recent reports on institutional practices and culture and commentaries that highlight marginalisation and rampant bullying in higher education have led us to rhetorically question if this could be a clarion call to education systems, institutions and researchers on the continent to take the investigation of intellectual cultures more seriously. Granted that more empirical research on the different dimensions of intellectual culture needs to be conducted to substantiate and generalise the claims made in the reports and commentaries, in this piece we would like to argue that the gender dimension needs to be given more research attention. The arguments and data presented in this article are based on ongoing early-stage research we are collaborating on, investigating the implications of gendered aspects of an intellectual culture that might have bearings on research participation in selected universities on the African continent. For the sake of clarity, we would like to state that by intellectual culture we are referring to what George Kuh and Elizabeth Whitt describe as the collective “persistent patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs and assumptions that shape the behaviour of individuals and groups in a college or university and provide a frame of reference within

which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off the campus". Aspects of intellectual culture are also seen as situated performances, as described by Silvia Gherardi in the book *Gender, Symbolism and Organizational Cultures*. A UNESCO report on gendered participation in research shows women now account for 53% of bachelor and masters degree graduates and 43% of PhD graduates worldwide, indicating considerable gains are evident in terms of achieving gender parity in higher education. However, the picture seems not-so-bright when one considers women's participation in research – men still total 72% of the researchers in the global pool while women make up a global average of only 28%.

Read more [here](#)

## 9. CNN

### **This \$1 made-in-Africa Covid-19 test kit could revolutionize testing on the continent (Senegal)**

For the first time since the Covid-19 outbreak began, Africa may be poised to reshape rapid testing for the virus on the continent. The Pasteur Institute, a biomedical research center based in Senegal's capital city of Dakar, says it is close to producing an affordable, handheld Covid-19 diagnostic test kit that can give results in a matter of minutes. The institute is running a new venture called DiaTropix, which has been working in partnership with five research organizations since March, including Mologic in the UK, to create the test kit. Amadou Sall, director of the Pasteur Institute and DiaTropix, told CNN that the biomedical center hopes the kit will cost as little as \$1 to purchase. "This is a very simple technology, like a pregnancy test that you can use everywhere at the community level, which is important for Africa," he said. According to Mologic, this rapid test kit does not require electricity or need laboratory analysis. Instead, it consists of a simple test strip housed in a plastic unit and uses a small blood sample collected by pricking a finger, much like tools used to test insulin. The blood is tested for coronavirus-related antibodies, and the result is shown on the test strip. A prototype of the kit was tested in June after raising funds from donors such as UK non-profit Wellcome Trust and the UK government, Sall said. Once regulatory checks are complete, the plan is to start manufacturing and distributing the kits. The Covid-19 rapid test kits will first be available on the continent through governments and health organizations like the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), Sall said.

Read more [here](#)

## 10. University World News

### **COVID-19: A time to reimagine and reposition universities (Africa)**

It seems obvious to say that higher education or universities have been deeply disrupted by COVID-19. This effect is not surprising – we have been and are, after all, living in an age of disruptions and crises that have not spared universities. COVID-19 has simply exacerbated those ongoing disruptions and crises. The situation requires of us to rethink and reimagine universities and their relationship to and their role in broader society. This is an opportune moment for deeper introspection and re-strategising. It is also an opportune time to rethink and reimagine our societies. The aim of this exercise is to act to create a different and better world. Universities should reposition themselves more strongly and visibly as key drivers and agents of change. By paralysing contact, in-person teaching, the pandemic hit at the heart of how universities usually operate. This mode of teaching has increasingly come under fire with the rise of online modes enabled by disruptive digital technologies. The pandemic has, in this regard, appeared to be a rapid innovator to a reluctant, tradition-bound institution. Apocalyptic prophecies of

the demise of brick-and-mortar universities, in which academics pontificate before bemused or disinterested students texting on their smartphones, have arisen. Rumours or prophecies of the death of the university as we know it are greatly exaggerated. It is now necessary to be future-orientated, to move further and faster, to adopt and adapt digital technologies, to develop online teaching methodologies and create curricula for online platforms. We need to embrace online teaching beyond the emergency remote mode that the pandemic has forced us to adopt. The future, however, does not lie in going wholesale online for all teaching but in varieties of hybridity or blended teaching and learning online offerings. Careful calibration is needed depending on the level of study, discipline, field and multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary offerings. Universities will now have to think of contact, hybrid and online offerings. It might make sense for undergraduate students to experience a mix of hybrid and online offerings, while postgraduates and professionals seeking further education have more online courses. It will still be necessary for some laboratory-based courses to be delivered in contact mode and for others to use virtual laboratories and technology-enabled simulations.

Read more [here](#)

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