

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

### 1. University World News

#### China increases scholarships to students from Sub-Saharan Africa (China-Africa)

China is the largest single provider of university scholarships to students from Sub-Saharan Africa, awarding about 12,000 from a total of 30,000 bursaries that were distributed by the top 50 global donors, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report. China, which provided 40% of all university scholarships for Sub-Saharan African students, was followed by South Africa, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Egypt, India, Germany and Japan, according to this year's report, titled Inclusion and Education: All means all. This suggests that Chinese so-called stadium construction diplomacy in Sub-Saharan Africa could be giving way to the soft-power strategy of granting a growing number of scholarships to African university students, government officials and ruling party cadres – and confirming China as one of the most dominant foreign powers on the continent. Although aid for scholarships in Sub-Saharan Africa had been stagnant since 2000, China's ongoing interest in the region has resulted in an increase in financial support for African international students since 2010. According to World Education Services, an organisation verifying credentials, some 30,000 Africans received scholarships between 2012 and 2015 and Beijing promised additional support. Fulfilling the promise, according to UNESCO, China increased the total scholarships – new and ongoing – for 2019-22 to 50,000. This is an increase of 20,000 on the number of scholarships that were made available in the preceding three years. It represents an additional 5,000 scholarships a year. To maintain a presence in the region, Germany, through DAAD, the German Academic Exchange Service, increased its scholarships to the region by 900 between 2014 and 2017, while, two years ago, the British government pledged a further 100 scholarships annually through its Chevening programme. In 2015, India also announced it was awarding 50,000 scholarships to students in Africa over the next five years. But UNESCO has voiced concerns that most of those scholarships are not inclusive since they fail to reach students who are marginalised and at risk of socio-economic exclusion. Whereas only 6% of the poorest 20% in Sub-Saharan Africa complete upper secondary education, the current scholarship environment does not indicate how many students in this category are beneficiaries. According to the report, most of the providers could not produce detailed background information as to whether recipients had rural backgrounds or a disability. In retrospect, whereas smaller providers, such as the World Bank, the African Union, the EU Erasmus, DAAD and KfW Development Bank have launched inclusive scholarships, most of the large providers have no such programmes.

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### 2. Biz Community

#### South Africa adopts innovative Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education (South Africa)

On 6 November, the South African Policy Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education was promulgated and became legally binding (Government Gazette no 43872). The innovative policy is a milestone for South African higher education. It becomes effective at a time when rethinking internationalisation in the wake of the outbreak of Covid-19 is a high priority. The Policy is conceptually on the cutting edge of the internationalisation discourse. It integrates the thinking of several leading experts and has the potential to elevate South Africa's higher education system to a globally leading position. Besides, it could become a blueprint for advancing higher education internationalisation in the developing

world. The new Policy encourages higher education institutions to develop models for institutional internationalisation which ensure that every student has an international experience. Central is that curriculum internationalisation, which must be advanced in tandem with other curriculum transformation imperatives, becomes mandatory. Thus, the Policy will assist in ensuring that South African tertiary graduates will become equipped to navigate unknown spaces and empowered to be globally competent citizens. The Policy commits South African higher education to comprehensive internationalisation, which means that internationalisation should permeate all aspects of their core business. It requires academic leaders to embrace scientific diplomacy, which is described as the ‘art and skill of managing good relations with all international organisations and institutions’. This novel concept aptly reflects the role of academic leadership in advancing international external relations. Scientific diplomacy should form the foundation of scientific cooperation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Constitutionally entrenched academic freedom is affirmed and contextualised. Institutions are imbued with the responsibility to structure internationalisation for their context through internationalisation policies and strategies. It is required that appropriate measurable indicators of internationalisation are developed. Institutions are further required to report back on the achievement of their internationalisation targets annually. The role of government in the internationalisation process will be enabling and facilitating rather than describing a direct steer. South African higher education stakeholders must mitigate risks associated with internationalisation, such as brain drain. They are obliged to safeguard the rights and interests of both incoming and outgoing international students. The Policy provides a space to innovate and integrate digital mobility and traditional mobility practices at all levels.

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### **3. University World News**

#### **Education networks ask AU to help lobby Governments (Africa)**

The African national research and education networks or NRENs have called on the African Union (AU) to help lobby African governments to recognise the work they do to enable technology and provide internet connectivity and other research and education tools to institutions in their countries. COVID-19 exposed the weak campus network and national internet infrastructure for education and research purposes and the need for governments to invest in strengthening these aspects. The appeal was made during the opening of the 14th annual conference of UbuntuNet Alliance, the regional research and education networking organisation for Eastern and Southern Africa. UbuntuNet Connect 2020, done virtually this year on 18 November, focused on the theme “Positioning Research and Education During Crises”. Dr Julianne Sansa-Otim, the vice-chairperson of UbuntuNet Alliance, said African NRENs were struggling to effectively operate in their respective countries as most of them do not enjoy support from their governments. NRENs promote access to critical scientific resources at affordable prices, capacity-building, content development and co-creation platforms. Some governments and their line ministries look at NRENs as internet service providers bent on making profits, said Sansa-Otim. “This has resulted in little or no government support to NRENs making it difficult for the NRENs to execute their obligations,” she said. “As our community deliberates on the COVID-19 crisis during this meeting, we would like to appeal to the AU to help in recognising and providing funding for formulation and implementation of strategies that can sustain teaching and learning during crises of this nature,” she added.

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#### 4. The New vision

##### **Inter-University Council moot for uniform tuition structure (Uganda)**

The Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) remains one of the surviving institutions of the first East African Community (EAC) that was dissolved in 1977. Though reaffirming its achievements accrued through cooperation and strategic development of higher education in East Africa, the IUCEA is yet to harmonise a uniform tuition structure of universities among member countries. According to Prof. Mike Kuria the IUCEA acting executive secretary, there is a lack of harmonisation which can be anchored on policy to allow a uniform fees structure. "The declaration of East African common higher education area needs to be operationalised by policy so that people are not doing things because they like them, but because there is law or policy that requires them to do so," observed Prof. Kuria. He made the remarks during the annual general meeting that was held on Tuesday at Golf view hotel, Entebbe to mark IUCEA's 50years of existence. The council of ministers made a decision recently, requiring East African member universities to charge uniform tuition fees from all students regardless of which East African country they hail from. However, Edward Sebina the commissioner social affairs in Uganda's ministry of East African affairs noted that such a resolution can easily be effected in public universities, even though there are private universities that subscribe to IUCEA. "The fees structure model is about public universities which are subsidised by the government," noted Sebina. He added that there are also variabilities in terms of courses offered at a given university. Meanwhile, Rtd. Maj. Gen. Kahinda Otafiire the minister for East African community affairs, appealed for a united East Africa if Universities are to make a break-through in science, research and innovation. "Our intellectual contribution is usually exploited by external people who take advantage of the weakness of the African continent. For example, we have failed to develop a Covid-19 vaccine on our own not because we lack scientists, but because we operate as individual states," remarked Minister Otafiire.

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#### 5. University World News

##### **Africa centres of excellence increase impactful research (Africa)**

Building on the success of the first Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence Project (ACE I), the World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD), in collaboration with African governments, have approved additional financing for the work done by the centres. The first and second projects will scale up and expand from 22 to 55 centres of excellence in 10 African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Ghana, Gambia, Guinea, Senegal, Togo, Nigeria and Niger, according to a recent statement. The first project or ACE I was launched in western and central Africa by the World Bank in 2014 to support higher education sectors specialising in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), agriculture and health. In the six years from 2014 to 2020, ACE I supported postgraduate students and continued to expand across Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on improving teaching and learning, expanding access and ensuring sustainability. ACE I expanded post-graduate and skills development in key fields as it supported at least 2,300 PhD students and 11,900 MSc students, of whom 30% were women and at least 30% were from the region. Besides improving the quality standards of educational programmes through obtaining international accreditation in at least 61 MSc and PhD programmes over the past six years (up from a baseline of three in 2014), ACE I has also promoted industry-university linkage through internships as 6,250 students participated in a one-month internship in hospitals, non-governmental organisations and private-sector firms. The ACE I project has improved the learning and teaching environment. At least 14 centres completed construction and installed equipment at their host university campuses, including new buildings, laboratories, conference rooms, lecture halls and smart classrooms. The participating universities used the ACE I grant-matching approach to raise more than US\$52 million in external funds.

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## **6. The conversation**

### **Post COVID-19: opportunity for universities to have a rethink (Africa)**

Universities have a long history of operating in environments that are unstable, disruptive and unpredictable. They've endured political upheavals, financial crises and disruptive trends such as digital transformation and globalisation. They've had to respond to demands for greater access, life-long learning and multiple competing demands from students, society, the state, industry and local communities. But the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented and a more formidable challenge. The scope and scale of its challenges have multiple dimensions. In the South African context, these are interwoven into existing socioeconomic conditions. These include poverty and deep, unsustainable inequalities. The pandemic is cause for pause. We have to make sense of its impact. More importantly, we have to seize the moment to be innovative, proactive and adapt for a post-COVID-19 world. Higher education has to re-think what its future would look like and take steps towards this. This is no easy task considering that the exact parameters of a post-COVID-19 future remain unknown. What's clear is that many aspects of the pre-COVID-19 reality will change. The pandemic has, for example, intensified existing disruptive trends and crises. These include digital transformation and financial crises. Futuristic trends are already emerging, having been accelerated by the pandemic. They include online teaching and learning and the need for up-skilling. Remote working, adoption of 3-D printing, artificial intelligence and robotics have also been accelerated by the pandemic. The pandemic has also challenged the suitability, viability and sustainability of university operating models, practices and systems. If they are to survive and thrive after the pandemic, universities must reassess and adapt their strategies. COVID-19 has many negative implications for higher education. These include the disruption of academic programmes and research, financial challenges, and health and wellbeing of staff and students. Graduates also face a constrained labour market due to the poorly performing economy that has been aggravated by the pandemic. These will reverberate long after the pandemic has been contained. The migration by universities to emergency remote learning has sharpened the existing socio-economic fault lines in higher education and society at large. This is mainly due to varying institutional resources and students' socio-economic circumstances. These hamper students' experience of the benefits of online education.

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## **7. University World News**

### **Students face challenges on route to self-employment (Ethiopia)**

Today's young graduates are confronted with the huge challenge of unemployment because of the fast-changing world of work and the limited and competitive opportunities available. While graduates are increasingly conscious of the wider range of opportunities that can open up as a result of their educational qualifications, they are equally aware that securing jobs on the basis of simply possessing academic credentials – as was the case in the old days – is extremely difficult, if not impossible. There is now an overwhelming interest in emphasising skills training at universities, since many of the challenges young people face in finding jobs are related to the mismatch between their education or training and labour market requirements. While this is understandable, it is obvious that the transition from universities to careers is not squarely dependent on the acquisition of skills defined to be important in the job market. In

addition to the need for skills training, which is assumed to solve the huge challenges that emanate from the misalignment between educational preparation and the demands of the job market, graduates are also advised to seek different mechanisms of job acquisition, including self-employment. However, this route, which has led many developing countries to adopt programmes that aim to promote self-employment and small-scale entrepreneurship, does not appear to have been properly investigated. As a result, there is limited information about its characteristics and especially its potential as a viable route to graduate employment. Hence, there is a need to understand the nature of self-employment and the challenges that hinder its success, especially for those who seek to use it as a possible route of graduate employment. A significant percentage of the working population in developing countries is engaged in self-employment. In urban areas of Ethiopia, for instance, the majority of employed populations are paid employees, (52.3%), who are working in the formal economy and receive salaries. They are followed by those who are self-employed (41.1%). As in most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, self-employment opportunities in Ethiopia lie largely in small, informal firms. Embodying substantial patterns of self-employment, the informal sector contributes to 38.6% of Ethiopia's GDP, which is consistent with the figure for Sub-Saharan Africa and that of low-income countries.

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## **8. The standard**

### **It is time for African States to build research-focused universities afresh (Kenya)**

Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 13.5 per cent of the global population but less than 1 per cent of global research output. In 2008, Africa produced 27,000 published papers – the same number as the Netherlands. There are some areas of improvement. A World Bank study showed that the quantity and quality of sub-Saharan Africa's research had increased substantially in the previous 20 years. It more than doubled its annual research output from 2003 to 2012. In addition, it increased its share of global research during the same period. But Africa's overall research record remains poor. Part of the problem is that the continent contributes less than 1 per cent of the global expenditure on research and development. African governments don't spend a significant percentage of their gross domestic product (GDP) on research. Another issue is that sub-Saharan Africa depends greatly on international collaboration and visiting academics for its research output. In 2012 southern Africa produced 79 per cent of all its research output through international collaborations. In east Africa the number stood at 70 per cent and in west and central Africa at 45%. This stands in stark contrast to intra-Africa collaboration which is extremely rare. Collaboration among local researchers ranges from 0.9 per cent in west and central Africa to 2.9 per cent in southern Africa. Limited government funding for universities lies at the root of these challenges. It is here that one of the solutions must be found. It's time for African universities, governments, and development partners to take action by fostering the development of research-active universities on the continent. The model we have developed at the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (Carta) provides evidence that revitalisation of the African academy in Africa by Africans is possible. Carta is a consortium of eight African universities and four African research centres. Carta has been independently evaluated and recommended as a model that should be more widely used. Three interlinked actions are crucial to revitalise African higher education. The first is the differentiation of the continent's higher education system. Some universities must become research-intensive. Their resources must be focused on graduate training and research. Second, new funding mechanisms must be created for these research-intensive universities. Finally, new accountability systems must be put in place to ensure high standards. There must also be room for new institutions to enter the system.

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## 9. University World News

### **Mentorship aims at enhancing graduate employability (South Africa)**

The transition from student to employee can be daunting, and frequently there's a lack of work-readiness and guidance, which can place young graduates at a disadvantage as they enter the world of work. This dilemma inspired the University of Pretoria (UP) to launch a Career Mentorship Programme to facilitate an easier transition and build a mutually beneficial relationship for mentor and mentee and, ultimately, for employer and employee. The programme was piloted in 2019 and what started with 32 final-year students, or 'mentees', from the School of Engineering and 24 mentors during the programme's pilot phase quickly snowballed to 66 mentees and 55 mentors this year. The key difference between last year's and this year's programme was the increase in the programme's reach. The 2020 programme saw students from two faculties participating whereas, last year, only students from a single department within a faculty participated. The faculty of engineering, built environment and information technology and the faculty of theology and religion were two of UP's faculties that participated in 2020. At a recent virtual event for mentors and mentees, Professor Norman Duncan, vice-principal (academic) at UP, who came up with the idea for the mentorship programme, said it would be extended to two more faculties next year. The mentors involved in the programme in 2019 were invited to be part of the programme. The university's alumni office provided names of former students who indicated through the university's LinkedIn portal that they were willing to be mentors. The mentors' experience varied from being early-career engineers to senior professionals. A Google form was created and included the mentees' names, courses and gender. The mentees also had to indicate why they wanted to be part of the programme. After that, the mentors were asked to identify which mentees they could mentor. Initially, the plan was for mentors to meet their mentees in person at least twice in the year, and for the mentees to be afforded an opportunity to shadow their mentors at their respective places of employment. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic meant that mentors and mentees had to rely on virtual meetings for their discussions on topics related to work and well-being, teamwork and cooperation, reporting, project controls and forecasting as well as management and leadership. In addition to face-to-face meetings, interaction took place on WhatsApp, e-mail and telephonically.

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## 10. University World News

### **Universities want to double tuition fees from next year (Kenya)**

Kenya has revived plans to increase fees for students enrolled at public universities from next year. Private institutions are considering similar plans, spelling doom for students who could be paying at least double the current charges next year. Vice-chancellors and chairs of university councils have asked parliament to sanction the proposed fees increment which is supposed to guarantee institutions' sustainability. The vice-chancellors want all state-sponsored students to pay annual tuition fees of US\$600, up from the current US\$265. This could earn public universities at least US\$450 million annually, which is expected to fund their operations and development expenditures. Private universities are also seeking to double their fees from the current US\$700 to US\$1,400 a year. "We have sought parliament's approval on how to address the funding gaps we are experiencing. The cost of training a student has gone up and must be shared appropriately between the university, parents and the government," said Geoffrey Muluvi, the chairman of the Vice-Chancellors' Committee. The decision by the vice-chancellors to seek parliament's intervention follows years of haggling between them and the ministry of education, which is opposed to the increase. Should parliament sanction the proposal, the ministry will have to implement the decision. Late last year, Kenya's Education Secretary, Professor George Magoha, asked universities not to increase tuition fees and, instead, execute austerity measures aimed at freeing up funds for investment in academic projects.

Parliament is expected to give its verdict about the increase in the next month. Kenya's public universities are currently financed by the government under the Differentiated Unit Cost (DUC) system, whereby funding is based on the cost of offering a degree programme. For private universities, the agency also issues conditional grants for specific programmes. The vice-chancellors now argue that the current model is no longer viable and most of the institutions are facing significant financial difficulties occasioned by rising financial pressures. Other higher education sector players also believe there is a need to restructure the current arrangement.

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### **11. University World News**

#### **What is China's higher education agenda in Africa? (China/Africa)**

Over the past three decades, China has become Africa's largest creditor with almost US\$152 billion in loans for building roads, highways, dams, airports and skyscrapers. Almost every African country is indebted to China. Under the caption 'Debt-Trap Diplomacy', Wikipedia estimates that in 2020 Angola tops the list of the 10 most indebted countries in Africa, owing an estimated US\$25 billion and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) comes at the bottom, owing approximately US\$3.4 billion.

As it was asserted in the South China Morning Post in May 2018, China is now Africa's most important economic partner. China has also successfully leveraged its economic influence to include African university education. During the peak of global communism between the 1950s and 1970s, China was sympathetic to Africa's economic and political plight on ideological grounds. China also supported African countries that opted for communism and positioned itself as a global, moral role model. In that period, as part of its development assistance, China offered Africans only a small number of graduate scholarships to study at its tertiary institutions. However, since 2000 China's graduate scholarships and grants to Africans to study in its tertiary institutions have increased to about 61,000. Over the same period, China has increasingly made its presence in Africa more visible by establishing more than 54 Confucius Institutes (CIs) and 27 Confucius Classrooms (CCs) across the African continent, according to the 2018 edition of Quartz Africa. Both CIs and CCs are major instruments designed to promote Mandarin and Chinese culture in Africa. The South China Morning Post reports that China has been highly successful in creating a cultural footprint across Africa, the world's fastest growing continent, through its Confucius Institutes. In addition, China's 20+20 scheme announced at the November 2009 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) ministerial conference links 20 African universities and colleges with those in China. African universities selected for the scheme include the universities of Cairo, Nairobi, Lagos, Dar es Salaam, Pretoria, Makerere and Stellenbosch. The scheme aims at ensuring a long-term collaboration between African and Chinese higher education. But collaboration for what? What could African universities learn from Chinese universities that they could not learn from European and American universities? This is a critical question in that Chinese universities increasingly imitate and promote Western university education models for their own use. More precisely, the Chinese insistence that morality and service to the public interest should be an integral component of doctoral education is not quintessentially Chinese.

Read more [here](#)

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