African Universities: Problems, COVID-19 & Efforts

Universidades Africanas: Problemas, COVID-19 & Esfuerzos

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ABSTRACT

It is necessary to know the state of the Universities in Latin America. The general objective was determine the situation of African Universities: Problems, COVID-19 & Efforts. Methodology, in this research, 39 documents have been selected, carried out in the period 2016 - 2021; including: scientific articles, review articles and information from websites of recognized organizations. The keywords used in the searches

were: African universities, African higher education, African universities COVID-19. Results, Universities in Africa receive inadequate funding, while maintenance costs rise; the Covid-19 pandemic had already had an impact on normal university expenditure and in short, the vision is to create world-class universities, based on African models and solutions. Conclusions, during the pandemic, African universities have closed their doors and due to the lack of technological resources and Internet access for students, classes cannot be taught properly.

Keywords: African universities, higher education, COVID-19.

1 INTRODUCTION

Africa is now facing a major demographical challenge. According to recent UN forecasts, the continent is expected to double its population by 2050, from 1 billion to nearly 2.4 billion inhabitants. Most importantly, half of that population will be less than 25 years old, which raises the urgent question of whether its economy has the capacity to absorb the millions of new arrivals that will soon flood its job market (AFD, 2019).

Yet the continent remains stubbornly inhospitable – politically, economically, and socially – to young people. The success of African governments' efforts to address this will be the single most important factor determining whether the continent prospers or suffers in the coming decades (UNDP, 2017).

Figure 1. Map of Africa

Source: United States Central Intelligence Agency (2002)

From the early 2000s, a new discourse emerged, in Africa and the international donor community, that higher education was important for development in Africa. Within this ‘zeitgeist’ of converging interests, a range of agencies agreed that a different, collaborative approach to linking higher education to development was necessary (Cloete, Bunting & van Schalkwyk, 2018).

A total of 13 African universities are featured in the QS World University Rankings® 2020, with the majority (eight) of these found in South Africa...The first six universities are all ranked in the 801-1000 range* and are therefore joint eighth in Africa (Collier, 2020).

South Africa’s 26 public universities are all members of Universities South Africa. They are distributed within all nine provinces of South Africa. Each province has at least one university, with Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape provinces having just acquired their own institutions during 2014/2015 (Universities South Africa, 2021).

Figure 2. Universities In South Africa

Name of the university	Web
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	https://www.cput.ac.za/
Central University of Technology, Free State	https://www.cut.ac.za/
Durban University of Technology	https://www.dut.ac.za/
Mangosuthu University of Technology	https://www.mut.ac.za/
Nelson Mandela University	https://www.mandela.ac.za/
North-West University	https://www.nwu.ac.za/
Rhodes University	https://www.ru.ac.za/
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	https://www.smu.ac.za/
Sol Plaatje University	https://www.spu.ac.za/
Stellenbosch University	https://www.sun.ac.za/
Tshwane University of Technology	https://www.tut.ac.za/
University of Cape Town	https://www.uct.ac.za/
University of Fort Hare	https://www.ufh.ac.za/
University of Johannesburg	https://www.uj.ac.za/
University of KwaZulu-Natal	https://www.ukzn.ac.za/
University of Limpopo	https://www.ul.ac.za/
University of Mpumalanga	https://www.ump.ac.za/
University of Pretoria	https://www.up.ac.za/
University of South Africa	https://www.unisa.ac.za/
University of the Free State	https://www.ufs.ac.za/
University of the Western Cape	https://www.uwc.ac.za/
University of the Witwatersrand	https://www.wits.ac.za/
Vaal University of Technology	https://www.vut.ac.za/
University of Zululand	https://www.unizulu.ac.za/
Walter Sisulu University	https://www.wsu.ac.za/

Source: Higher Education & Training Republic of South Africa (2021).

Figure 3. University Rankings

Source: Topuniversities (2019)

Research into the mechanisms for financing of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa which can deliver expanded access, quality and equity will depend and largely draw on a framework of the macro-economic context, demographic shift, demand and supply, and the regulatory framework for delivering and managing sustainable quality higher education in the region (Oketch, M. (2016).

In the case of South Africa's 20 universities and 6 universities of technology, higher education institutions generate or receive slightly more revenue from student fees, donations and other sources (the orange line) than they do from government grants (the blue line). In 2019, total revenue amounted to just over R88 billion, with R42 billion from government grants and R46 billion from non-grant funding (Statistics South Africa, 2020).

Political, business, and cultural elites from around the world have a strong affinity for the United Kingdom (UK) education system. Nowhere is this truer than in West Africa, where some families in Nigeria and Ghana have a long tradition of sending their children to private boarding schools and universities in the UK (Page, 2021).

3 METHODOLOGY

The research presents a qualitative-interpretative design, of a documentary type, which specified the selection procedure and the data recording (Barrero y Rosero, 2018).

In this research, 39 documents have been selected, carried out in the period 2016 - 2021; including: scientific articles, review articles and information from websites of recognized organizations. The keywords used in the searches were: African universities, African higher education, African universities COVID-19. For the selection of the documents, the following criteria were used: the year of publication, belonging to the research and being a reliable source. After reading each document, the data was entered into the bibliographic matrix, which is used to catalog the documents according to categories, which are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Bibliographic matrix

Name	Type	Objectives	Conclusions

Source: Adapted from Barrero & Rosero (2018).

4 RESULTS

4.1 PROBLEMS

Corporate organizational practices, commodification and commercialization of knowledge, dictated by market ethics, dominate university practices in Africa with negative impact on professional values, norms and beliefs (Cross & Ndofirepi, 2017).

This report provides analyses of the #FeesMustFall protests in nine universities...Over the years, historically black universities have been characterised by multiple and violent student protests, well before the #FeesMustFall movement in 2015 and 2016 (Langa, Ndelu, Edwin & Vilakazi, 2017).

Overall enrollments in higher education have more than doubled since the end of the apartheid system in South Africa in 1994, when a reported 495,000 students were enrolled in higher education. A significant part of enrollment gains occurred in distance education programs – 372,331 students, or about one third of the 969,155 students enrolled at public universities in 2014, were studying in distance education mode (Macha & Kadakia, 2017).

South Africa has 26 public universities with nearly one million students while 700 000 students are registered at the more than 50 higher education training colleges (TVET colleges – Technical vocational education training). An additional 90 000 students can be found at various private institutions (Tjønneland, 2017).

The findings revealed a lack of effective relationships between universities and USC to preserve communities' histories. Hence, the communities' archives are tools for teaching and scholarship.

Relations between universities and USC are to be built on trust. Accountability and transparency are to be considered by both parties (Netshakhuma, 2019).

The mandatory phasing in of the Moodle learning environment within South African universities has met with a variety of uptake challenges... The study revealed that the top-down imposition of mandatory Moodle implementation was resisted by lecturers, hindering uptake, and maximum potential was difficult to measure (Mpungose, 2020).

The reason for this “student exodus” is that those who can afford it head abroad for their tertiary education. Why do they go? A survey done last year found that 71% of African students studying outside Africa thought a degree earned abroad represented a higher-level qualification than a degree at home (UNESCO, 2019).

In recent decades millions of young people like Mr Bahati have swelled the number of students in sub-Saharan Africa. Today 8m are in tertiary education, a term that includes vocational colleges and universities (The Economist, 2019).

While South African scholarly attitudes and behaviour are certainly shaped by the institutional policy structures in which they are situated, they are also impacted by the social, departmental, and disciplinary norms and expectations, or “culture,” that defines their workspace and networks (Cox & Trotter, 2019).

If this is the situation in the US, imagine the situation in Africa. As country after country announced lockdowns, universities emptied out. The majority of students are at home, most do not have access to laptops and in some cases, even to smartphones (The World Bank Group, 2021).

Universities in Africa receive inadequate funding, while maintenance costs rise. Plus, they face disruptions by strikes, sociopolitical unrest and challenges like the current coronavirus pandemic. For all of these reasons, African higher education institutions are forced to search for alternatives (UNICAF, 2021).

5 COVID-19

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation is consulting with Vice Chancellors of universities and colleges across the country and will soon be announcing measures in this regard,” the statement said, adding those who have been in contact with the student will be quarantined (Isilow, 2020).

Covid-19 has paved the way for African universities to lead from the front on local issues whilst tackling global challenges head-on; ensured that the knowledge project supports a multiplicity of voices, methods and framings; and forged inclusive communities of scholars across the world (Osman, 2020).

Since the announcement of the outbreak in January 2020, Nelson Mandela University has been exploring ways in which it can help fight the spread of the virus. Everyone is encouraged to take responsibility by educating yourself about the virus, and to heed all precautionary measures (Nelson Mandela University, 2020).

A UWC COVID-19 Advisory Team consisting of University management, officials and medical experts is closely monitoring and following recommendations from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, the National Department of Health, the World Health Organization (WHO) and other official sources. In addition, the team, and other professional staff, have set in motion academic and business continuity plans in the event of an emergency (University of the Western Cape, 2021).

Nzimande said the Covid-19 pandemic had already had an impact on normal university expenditure, and substantial savings were realised with the postponement of a range of activities such as cancelled conferences and limited travel and accommodation.

(Maqhina, 2020)

5.1 EFFORTS

Just one year after its establishment, the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) is once again garnering attention for its effectiveness in connecting a diverse group of African Universities to global university networks. The alliance, made up of 15 institutions from eight African countries...(Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2016).

The African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) is a network of universities from different countries and different historical backgrounds, but with a common vision. ARUA aims to enhance research and graduate training in member universities through a number of channels, including the setting up of Centres of Excellence (CoEs) to be hosted by member universities (ARUA, 2017).

The study reported that students at the two universities had similar perceptions of entrepreneurial intentions, and that students from Tshwane University of Technology are more likely to encourage other people to study entrepreneurship education than their Walter Sisulu University counterparts (Letsoalo & Rankhumise, 2020).

In short, the vision is to create world-class universities, based on African models and solutions, which can help transform societies and nations and tackle the local and global challenges of today and tomorrow (Chipperfield, 2016).

Drawing on disruptive innovation theory and a review of mainstream literature on MOOCs adoption in American and African tertiary sectors, this study argues that behind the MOOC rhetoric of disrupting and democratizing higher education lies the projection of top academic brands on the

marketing pedestal, financial piggybacking on the hype and politics of academic exclusion (Rambe & Moeti, 2017).

The network of higher education institutions in the US and SA was founded in 2018 to strengthen South Africa's higher education sector, and this grant will allow UP and the University of Venda, working with Rutgers University-Newark, to increase the number of students from SA and the US engaged in exchanges, collaborative research and other partnerships (Boje, 2020).

The role of leadership in universities is a good starting point from which to deepen an understanding of decolonisation. The narratives of the participants illuminate some of the complexities, tensions and challenges that leadership continue to face in South Africa (Du Plessis, 2021).

However, the university cannot fully decolonise if society remains in colonial mode. The university must play a dual, concurrent role of decolonising itself and informing the societal decoloniality project (Chikoko, 2021).

South Africa offers the highest standard of university education in Africa. It is home to 23 public universities offering both academic and vocational study, including many rating highly in the QS World University Rankings (Cambridge International, 2021).

South Africa is leading the top 200 best universities in Africa in 2020, according to Unirank...On the list, the University of Pretoria, University of Cape Town, University of the Witwatersrand, University of Johannesburg and University of KwaZulu-Natal, all South African based universities have been ranked in the top five (Buningwire, 2020).

Schools and organisations such as Bridge2Rwanda (Rwanda), Barwaaqo University (Somaliland), Nova Pioneer Schools for Innovators and Leaders (Kenya/South Africa), Makomborero (Zimbabwe), African Leadership Academy (South Africa) and CIYOTA/COBURWAS (Uganda/DRC) are examples of organisations that have created strong international partnerships...(Acholonu & Njie, 2020).

6 CONCLUSIONS

With the end of apartheid, the number of students in South Africa increased. African universities are having trouble raising funds and serving the growing number of students. During the pandemic, African universities have closed their doors and due to the lack of technological resources and Internet access for students, classes cannot be taught properly. Many of these students, due to the aforementioned difficulties and financial limitations, have had to withdraw from the university. African universities make joint efforts to improve it, such as the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA). South Africa offers high standards of university education in Africa, some of them stand out in the QS World University Rankings.

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