VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

3rd BIENNIAL CONFERENCE ON THE STATUS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN KENYA

CONFERENCE DATES: 28th – 29th OCTOBER 2020

CONCEPT NOTE & CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

CONFERENCE THEME: IMPACT OF DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY ON THE FUTURE OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

1.0 Background

That the world is constantly changing is now a truism. From Uber changing the way people use Taxis to Airbnb changing people’s hotel reservations, not to mention 3-D printing that is threatening the future of manufacturing. In education, online course offerings have had its share of scaring universities and the future of traditional modes of learning and content delivery. At the centre of these changes is technology, the very tool that universities build, test and train users. But humans have a tendency to want to stay within the known and tradition. Universities are particularly averse to rapid change due to their struggle to balance tradition with change. But it only takes a small trigger to send the world into forced change. The global phenomenon that has seen Coronavirus has done just that—forced everyone to change in unprecedented ways. Within a few weeks of the emergence of the virus, learning institutions have had to close. Institutions that had embraced the new world of technology have been able to maintain their learning through various online platforms. But what if the virus was attacking the very technology we have come to depend on so heavily? What if it affected our means of communication? How do we continue to do university education in this era of disruptions and constant change?
The 3rd Biennial Conference organized by the Commission for University Education invites proposals from scholars, researchers and other educational practitioners to help answer these questions. Papers, posters, and roundtable discussions should focus on how university education in its broader sense is poised for and responding to disruptions taking place that do and will affect it variably. Presentations will be confined to the following sub-themes:

**Sub-Theme 1: Leveraging and adapting new technologies for enhanced student-centered, teaching and learning outcomes**

The distinct waves of disruptive technologies are presently changing established ways of teaching and learning across the world. The impact of disruptive technology and growing student requirements for a demonstrable return on their substantial investment in learning have meant that the structure and purpose of Higher Education is now under close scrutiny than ever before. There are immense digital innovations such as Collaborative platforms, Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality that are poised to enormously disrupt and revolutionize the very fabric of learning and on a good side inject value in the educational processes.

Are universities moving with the changing times? How are universities disrupting themselves? What are universities doing to transform their teaching practices to conform to the demands of the present and to anticipate the future through the creative use of technology?

Presentations and discussions under this subtheme are expected to address such questions that will inform policies on advancement and relevance of university education.

**Subtheme 2: University Education in the Context of the Covid-19 pandemic**

Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has unleashed a series of unprecedented events affecting every industry across the globe. Amongst the hard hit is the education sector with the pandemic making a substantial, and perhaps, lasting impression. Universities have been thrown into very uncertain waters as they are forced to move online on an untested and unprecedented scale while struggling with a myriad of other issues, especially in the realm of finances. An unintended consequence of this pandemic is that higher education will become significantly more accessible as universities
think about how to move all of their programmes online, including and not limited to student life, career development and counselling.

What can be done to mitigate the negative impacts that the global lockdown on education institutions may have had on university education? What measures should institutions put in place to ensure that online learning and assessments are not inferior alternatives to the face to face mode of learning? What is the future of university education in a post Covid-19 era? This subtheme is expected to elicit discussions on universities preparedness to cope with disasters and to ensure that the much reckoned university objectives - teaching, research and community engagement continue unabated.

Subtheme 3: Role of Disruptive Technologies in an Era of Reduced University Funding

Universities are facing increasing pressure to improve efficiencies and reduce operating costs to ensure their continued existence. The pressure is coming from all sides - declining capitation, stakeholders pleading for more efficiency, more productivity, more graduates, and better learning outcomes as well as students worried about affording another round of tuition increases. Yet, university leadership must craft ways and strategise on best ways to manage their institutions in this era of reduced funding. How can universities leverage on disruptive technologies to reduce costs and yet retain quality?

This session will elicit discussions focused on addressing governance issues, sustainability concerns of universities and academic programmes. Case studies of universities that have successfully implemented reforms will form interesting discourse.

2.0 Conference Format

The conference will bring together eminent scholars and key policy makers for two days of plenary and round table discussions on key strategies and experiences undertaken by universities in Kenya (and other countries) in responding to the rapid technological disruptions, increased stakeholder expectations, disaster preparedness to natural calamities such as Covid-19 pandemic and changes in university funding.
3.0 Expected Outcome

The expected outcomes of the conference are:

i) Develop draft policy recommendations on leveraging disruptive technologies in enhancing quality, relevance, access and student experience in university education;

ii) Initiate and develop strategic partnerships and networks amongst policy makers, think tanks, scholars, and key stakeholders in university education; and

iii) Generate materials to be published as conference proceedings

4.0 Submissions

Identified guest speakers will make presentations on the various subthemes. The conference will however be open to interested participants to listen and make contributions.

Conference registration link, programme and other details will be shared in due course.

Identified speakers will be required to send their abstracts of not more than 250 words to biennialconference@cue.or.ke, Attn: Prof. Jackson Too, not later than 1st October 2020.