

Covid-19 and Resilience of Universities in Mozambique: Major Drifts in Traditional Cooperation, Teaching and Research

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Abstract

Research has shown a considerable interconnection between the outbreak of Covid-19 and the drift in the traditional ways of teaching and research/knowledge production especially in the Higher Education (HE) environment. Due to the growing relevance of HE, specifically knowledge production and application, there has also been an increasing debate on the necessity of instituting asynchronous networks with local and regional universities. The reason behind the inception of such collaborations is to stimulate university peer learning, lessen proliferation of the pandemic, which in turn will then inform policy. Within the Southern Region of Africa, the initiative has dominated either English speaking countries or high economic states with South Africa being the hub of the agenda. Hence, Francophone and Lusophone countries on the other hand appear to lag behind. The aim of this paper is to illustrate the gap which exists between countries and universities in the aforementioned categories. It brings experiences of two leading Mozambican universities (the Methodist University and the Catholic University of Mozambique) in asynchronous learning and shows how these institutions attempt to lessen the proliferation of Covid-19.

The authors also investigate how those Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) launch their agendas and comply with the goals of SARUA in terms of collaboration and becoming institutions of reference. The argument is that under Covid-19, state universities have been slow in adopting alternative means of learning, privately funded universities in turn have been quick to adjust to online models as a potential of sustainability. Why was this the case in Mozambique? How can the two selected institutions extend their policies through regional cooperation with SARUA, the University of South Africa (UNISA) and then inspire other HEIs in the country? In order to address these questions the study selected three universities that were viewed as pioneers and influential in asynchronous learning. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic such institutions have strengthen their efforts. As to their location, two are

in Mozambique: The Methodist University and The Catholic University of Mozambique and the third in South Africa: UNISA.

Additional concerns will be extended to (a) with which local, regional institutions do these universities cooperate? (b) What is the reason behind such cooperation? (c) What results have come out from the networking (d) what is the criteria for the selection of the institutions of mutual engagement both nationally and regionally? The research will apply interviewing methods with at least five categories of influencers, namely: (a) academic, (b) university leaders, (c) industry, (d) government and (e) civil society. The underlying focus in the selection of the five groups is to capture the value each category points to the asynchronous model in innovating teaching, learning and research (short-term) and rate how this has strengthen universities during Covid-19 and in the near future (long-term). In addition, is the assessment of the level of disruption found by the groups of Covid-19 and changes in the traditional ways of producing knowledge and how both collaboration and networks between HEIs are shaped.

Key words: *Higher Education, Asynchronous Collaboration, Research, Networks, COVID19*