

African Varsities Challenged to Scale up research training.

Universities in the African continent have been challenged to scale up the training of scholars who will take up research endeavours and solve the problems facing the continent.

This was said during the second Vice-Chancellors meeting at the University of Nairobi. The Vice-Chancellors drawn from various countries in Africa that part of CARTA - Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa. The two day event was held from July, 10-11, 2017.

Chief Guest during the event, Prof. Chacha Nyaigoti Chacha, Chairman, Commission of University Education, noted that African scholarship is a great opportunity for Africans to pursue higher education. Prof. Chacha remembered with nostalgia, the years past, the 1970s and 1980s, when University staff members benefited from staff development program and they had an opportunity to train in the European and American universities. He took the opportunity to thank CARTA for giving the young scholars an opportunity to pursue their research agenda. "The economic reigns of a country are linked to research", he said. He further cautioned universities to safeguard the quality of education instead of concentrating on mass production of graduates.

University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbithi observed that 'for Africa to sit at the table of best performers like South Korea that pride itself in having top leading electronic companies like Samsung, LG among others, then funding of research is critical. Without research the African dream of prosperity for all will not be realized.' Prof. Mbithi noted that research, technology transfer and innovation are key for a better Africa.

Sharon Fonn, Executive Director, CARTA laid out the vision of the consortium which is building multidisciplinary research hubs in Africa. She noted that the objective of starting CARTA was to produce high quality doctoral graduates and shift focus to graduate training. The main focus is training of the teaching staff who are already committed to the academy. CARTA program aims at equipping graduates with critical thinking skills to be research leaders and change agents. At the moment, over 450 academic staff from finance, administration and technology have joined the program.

Among the challenges facing CARTA that were highlighted during the second Vice-Chancellors meeting include the tough registration process into the doctorate program, some members of the post doctorate not being part the system, the inability of the students to get workload re-assigned, the working environment in some cases not academically stimulating.

Going forward, the CARTA Secretariat observed that the meeting of the Vice-Chancellors will be held every two years to discuss challenges, provide the solutions and mobilize finances to train as many researchers as possible.