

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

The University News

TVET – The new stepbrother to higher education? (Africa)

“It would be wiser not to talk about higher education exclusively [at the upcoming dialogue] but [also] rather TVET” ... so that there would be “more appetite to support higher education than TVET”.

I recently received this note from a staff member at a major development agency, indicating that organisation’s current leaning towards educational support in Africa. It was not the first time I had encountered such sentiments. The exchange brought back the unpleasant memory of the flawed World Bank study and, consequently, the infamous policy rampant on the continent during the 1970s and 1980s. That study – which declared that higher education had a low rate of return and was thus a poor investment – was later blamed for pushing the sector to its near collapse. In a complete turnabout in 2015, the bank declared that the rate of return on African higher education is not only high, but at 21%, is among the highest in the world. Even before this announcement, the World Bank was actively engaged in supporting a new initiative to revitalise the African higher education sector through what is known as the African Centers of Excellence initiative. Established in 2014, the project aims to strengthen universities’ capacity to deliver high quality training and applied research, and promote regional specialisation in areas that address specific common regional development challenges. While it was initially confined to West Africa, it has now expanded to include East and Southern Africa. The African Union’s Pan-African University launched in 2008 predates this World Bank initiative. Established in five major university hubs on the continent, it aims to build institutions of excellence in science, technology, innovation and social sciences as the bedrock for an African pool of higher education and research.

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Tax cuts to stimulate science research at universities (Egypt)

Higher education institutions and scientific research centres in Egypt will be exempt from tax and customs duties as part of new measures aimed at stimulating research and innovation in the country. Egypt’s Parliament approved the exemption of higher education and scientific research entities from taxation and tariffs, including value-added tax on equipment and materials imported from abroad to implement research projects. The measures are outlined in a new law detailing the incentives for science, technology and innovation (STI), approved by parliament in the House of Representatives earlier this month. Higher education STI performance levels are low in Egypt, according to the Global Competitiveness Report 2017-2018. Out of 137 countries, Egypt ranked 100th in higher education and training, 130th in the quality of education system, 121st in scientific research institutions, 122nd in mathematics and science education, 123rd in capacity for innovation, and 117th in university-industry collaboration in research and development. According to a local news report, the state budget draft for the financial year 2017-18 allocates over EGP68 billion (US\$3.87 billion) for higher education and EGP35 billion (US\$1.99 billion) for scientific research.

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What do the next 10 years hold for higher education? (Africa)

When the Africa edition of University World News first appeared in 2008, the initial issues provided greater focus on matters related to higher education in South Africa; this was understandable since it was sponsored by what was then the South African-based Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET). However, it quickly started providing a much wider coverage to become what it is today – the indispensable, fortnightly news outlet on higher education across the African continent. It so happened that it was in 2008 that I assumed office as the secretary-general of the Association of African Universities in Accra, Ghana, a position that enabled me to have a bird’s-eye view of the higher education sector in Africa. So, 2008 was also a special year for me. The past decade has witnessed many positive developments in the African higher education sector but if I were to identify three of them, they would be the following. First, the explicit acknowledgement of higher education as an important tool for Africa’s development. This was confirmed at the 2009 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education which put special focus on the revitalisation of higher education in Africa. Also, the African Union’s Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015) recognised that support for higher education had declined in the previous decade but that there was renewed interest, driven by the new vision of the African Union and the recognition that higher education had the potential of providing African-led solutions to African problems.

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Mugabe PhD case – University head to stand trial (Zimbabwe)

A Harare court has ruled that University of Zimbabwe Vice-chancellor Professor Levi Nyagura has a case to answer for allegedly awarding former first lady Grace Mugabe a doctor of philosophy degree ‘corruptly’ in 2014, hence he must stand trial. The ruling comes at a time when the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development has lodged a complaint with the Attorney General, saying it has nothing to do with the case as it believes that it is a purely academic matter that must be dealt with by the university senate or council. Nyagura, who was arrested on 16 February, challenged his placement on remand but in her ruling, Harare magistrate Ms Tilda Mazhande ruled Nyagura has a case to answer and must remain on remand pending trial. In a related matter, another magistrate has issued a fresh warrant for the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) to search and seize all documents from the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) relevant to its investigation into the awarding of the degree to Mugabe. Harare Provincial Magistrate Mr Elisha Singano issued the first warrant on 12 February, but the High Court stopped its execution four days later saying it was not properly obtained. ZACC successfully applied for a fresh warrant.

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Science academy launches two new mobility funds (Africa)

Two new mobility funds have been launched by the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), aimed at encouraging African researchers to work together and with their Indian counterparts to better address health and development challenges. Both the Science and Language Mobility Scheme Africa and the Africa-India Mobility Fund are to be implemented through the Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESAs), an initiative founded by AAS in partnership with the NEPAD Agency. They are supported by Wellcome, the

Pasteur Institute and, in the case of the Africa-India fund, the India Alliance. Together, the funds are worth US\$500,000 and aim to reach 100 researchers in Africa and India.

Over five years the Science and Language Mobility Scheme will offer travel grants to Francophone and Anglophone African researchers involved in biomedical science and public health of 'relevance' to national, regional or global health needs. According to an AESA press release, Africans tend to collaborate more with counterparts in the United States or Europe than with researchers on the continent, as researchers from Anglo- and Francophone countries are limited by language, culture and political barriers. Citing a 2010 report by Thomson Reuters which found that none of the continent's six stronger research nations – Algeria, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Tunisia – had an African country among its top five collaborating countries, the statement said a lack of collaboration resulted in "missed opportunities for sharing knowledge as with the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, where the lack of intra-Africa collaboration meant researchers in this region could not benefit from knowledge and capacities available in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which had previously experienced outbreaks of the disease".

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The Daily Nation

Commission of University Education records increase of private varsity student numbers (Kenya)

Universities are still enrolling a high number of self-sponsored students despite a steep fall in secondary school graduates scoring grades that guarantee direct entry to the institutions. A report by the Commission for University Education shows that though all students who scored grade C+ and above in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination joined university through government sponsorship, module II programmes registered increased enrolment. The report, covering 2014 and 2016 and which will be released soon, indicates that students paid Sh147 billion as fees during the period.

Public universities received Sh99.3 billion while private ones got Sh47.8 billion. "Fees increased by 10 per cent from Sh46.3 billion in 2014 to Sh51 billion in 2016. The fee in public and private universities increased by 11.2 and 7.7 per cent respectively," the report adds.

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Daily Monitor

Technical students also need soft skills (Uganda)

The general outcry in the country and beyond has been equipping students with hands on vocational, technical and business skills, so they are able to maneuver the competitive job market. However, apart from carpentry, shoe making, tailoring, cookery and all other such courses, other soft skills that help a vocational school graduate survive the turbulence of life. Just like Nabukenya, Jeremiah Mugoya, a second year plumbing student at Nile Vocational Institute, Jinja, agrees to the same. "For example, when I go out to start working in the field my clients will need someone who can effectively communicate with them, keep time, in addition to being able to deliver results. But as a person, I need to be able to manage my finances and business well meaning, I will need these skills for survival," Mugoya says.

Marketing: Yahaya Walusansa, the academic registrar Uganda Technical College Kichwamba, notes that they equip their students with soft skills alongside hands on skills. "Students study entrepreneurship for example and implement it during their time of study. As we speak, there is an ongoing marketing project. Students were tasked to create products and market them. Some are washing cars, others making juice and using different techniques to attract customers for their products," Walusansa explains.

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Higher education – Caught in a double bind? (Africa)

Key reports and studies on African higher education over the last 10 years have tracked some of the main features of the sector and provide a snapshot of the state of the sector as a whole. By far the most striking trend has been the sector's continuing, and increasingly rapid, expansion. This growth is unsurpassed by any other region in the world and, while definitely needed, it has also given rise to a range of related challenges. Higher than average growth in Africa dates back to the 1970s. For instance in Sub-Saharan Africa, the gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education grew by an average of 8.6% each year between 1970 and 2008, compared with the global average of 4.6%, according to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) trend report. In enrolment terms, whereas there were less than 250,000 students in tertiary education in Africa in 1970, by 2000 university enrolment had shot up to 3.53 million, according to the Africa Capacity Report 2017. As many as 2.25 million of these students were from Sub-Saharan Africa, while 1.28 million were enrolled in universities in North Africa, notably in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. Ten years later, the number had increased to 9.54 million students, with Sub-Saharan Africa registering 6.34 million and North Africa 3.2 million. As of today, the African Development Bank estimates that there are 14 million students in higher education in Africa, representing about 6.4% of global tertiary education enrolments. Similarly, universities in Africa have increased steadily from just about 100 in 1970 to over 1,500 in 2010 and the number is currently hurtling towards the 2,000 mark.

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Are universities ready for the Fourth Industrial Revolution? (North Africa)

Several major higher education developments in North Africa in the last 10 years have successfully promoted the development of a knowledge-based economy, according to Samir Khalaf Abd-El-Aal, research professor at the National Research Centre in Cairo. "The region has moved away from the teaching university model responsible for producing qualified human resources to the research university model with an emphasis on knowledge generation and entrepreneurialism," Abd-El-Aal said. He said the importance of entrepreneurial universities was increasingly being recognised by higher education ministries and other decision-makers. Universities have been established in smart cities – in the Casablanca Smart City in Morocco, the Tunis Smart City in Tunisia, and the Nouakchott Smart City Project in Mauritania – all of which are fostering industry-academic cooperation and greater employment opportunity for university graduates, along with promoting knowledge transfer, the development of new syllabuses and the production of human resources needed for an innovation-based economy, according to Abd-El-Aal.

Several research universities have also been established, including Zewail City of Science and Technology and the Nile University – both in Egypt, and aimed at fostering innovation, promoting entrepreneurship and developing a sustainable knowledge economy

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The ongoing project of 'reimagining' higher education (South Africa)

On 3 February 1995, President Nelson R Mandela signed into being the National Commission on Higher Education with the purpose of producing a plan for the transformation of South Africa's university system and the individual institutions within it. Needless to say, this commission did not adopt an ab initio approach since a system was already in place and the struggle for democracy had generated a tremendous amount of new

thinking about the place and role of universities during a period that was to be driven by a nationally shaped programme and an ethic of reconstruction and development.

It was a heady time, a period of euphoria and great hope: here was an opportunity to revisit and reimagine higher education as a social institution in the service of a transforming society. At the time of the commission the participation rate of 18- to 24-year olds sat at about 13-14% with fewer than 500,000 students in the system. The commission, like other policy processes at the time, zoomed in on five substantial projects. The first was the concern that the system was riven by deep race and gender imbalances – both amongst the student cohorts entering universities, among the academic staff and in the ranks of the senior leadership.

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The University World News

Proposed new curriculum heralds changes for universities (Kenya)

Higher learning institutions in Kenya may be required to transform their current education systems in accordance with a proposed new education curriculum aimed at producing employable graduates, expected to be rolled out next year. According to the Basic Education Curriculum Framework, a university degree will take three years while college education, technical and vocational training will last for two years. This is unlike in the current system where the diploma course takes three years while a university degree takes at least four years. The new system, which seeks to replace the current 8-4-4 that has been in place for 32 years, focuses on skills instead of knowledge. It is phased as follows: two years of pre-school, six years of primary school, six years of high school, and three years of tertiary or university education (2-6-6-3). The Ministry of Education says it is proposing to change the curriculum in order to realign the education sector with the Kenya Vision 2030 and Constitution of Kenya 2010. In August the Ministry of Education plans to hold a national conference on curriculum reforms to review the progress of the ongoing national piloting of the curriculum that will determine whether the government should go ahead and roll it out. As per the new framework, students will advance from three years of senior secondary school level with specialisations in specific courses based on their abilities to join universities or vocational training colleges.

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The University World News

Africa Higher Education Summit- Book Launch (Senegal)

A new book, Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education, will be launched at the African Higher Education Summit being held in Senegal's capital Dakar next week. It is the latest publication of HERANA – the Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa – which for the past seven years has been investigating higher education in eight African countries. This special report highlights key findings arising from the research, which is led by the Centre for Higher Education Transformation and funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. University World News is a media partner to both HERANA and the Dakar summit.

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The Mail and Guardian

Free higher education is a game of cut and balance (South Africa)

National Treasury Director General Dondo Mogajane says government is prepared to follow through on a commitment to phase in fee-free higher education within the confines of the national fiscus. Mogajane was taking part in a panel discussion at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business on Tuesday afternoon. He admitted that National Treasury was put on the spot by then president Jacob Zuma's announcement in December last year that government would begin implementing fee free higher education. However, he said National Treasury was committed to seeing through its implementation over a five year period, especially if expenditure in the first phase of the policy was effective. "We were putting the facts out there to say that South Africa was in trouble. Immediately the president at the time announced R40-billion worth of intervention measures and it helped us focus. We identified R15-billion in tax hikes and R25-billion in spending cuts," said Mogajane. He said that other than the national fiscus, outside pressure to steer a steady ship for the economy meant that National Treasury could not commit recklessly to a drive as costly as this.

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The University World News

Five signs universities are turning into corporations (General)

Universities in many parts of the world are buckling under multiple financial, societal and political demands. This has led to increasingly loud calls for what are called 'enhanced efficiencies' – a term drawn from the business world. And some institutions are heeding those calls. They're drawing wholesale on the logic of the market in their bid to survive. They are becoming administrative universities without truly understanding how such initiatives chip away at the very purpose of higher education: the academic project.

The nature of the academic project differs from institution to institution – some will focus more on workplace employment, others on critical citizenship, and so on. But it will always be about the furthering of knowledge and the development of knowers. In 2011, Benjamin Ginsberg, political science professor at Johns Hopkins University, argued that United States universities were losing hold of the academic project by becoming administrative institutions.

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The University World News

Students unite to raise concerns about HE quality (Mauritania)

A new student-centred 'diagnosis' of higher education in Mauritania depicts a system defined by inadequate infrastructure, poor opportunities for postgraduate study, threats to academic freedom and unilateral decision-making by the ministry – all of which are having a negative impact on the students' experience. The report entitled National Higher Education and the Harvest of the Unilateral Pathways was prepared by the Students' Front for the Defence of Rights and Acquisitions, which includes several students' organisations such as the National Union of Mauritanian Students, the Independent Union of Mauritanian Students, the National Student Union, Al-Wava Student Union and the Liberal Union of Mauritanian Students. The report received television coverage when the secretary general of the National Union of Mauritanian students presented it on 6 March on the Al-Mashhad programme produced by Elmourabiton TV channel. Among the students' complaints is the lack of a proper review of the LMD system – a uniform structure of tertiary study known in French as the licence-master-doctorate that came into effect in 2008 and was designed to align Mauritanian higher education with international systems and standards.

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Daily Monitor

Time to implement skills-driven learning (Uganda)

The endless bickering about the quality of young graduates entering the employment market is quite frankly the ultimate gauge of teaching and learning in our schools. Learners expect to acquire new knowledge and skills through quality teaching that could involve a structured sequence, often beginning with modelling, demonstration or illustration by the teacher. Promoting more skills learning than content retention is key to refining the quality of education. Is seating our children in rows while they are stuffed with facts to which they have to regurgitate in exams a valid system of education in the 21st Century? Studying current global labour trends, if you want a job, you must be as unlike a machine as possible; creative, critically thoughtful and socially skilled. So why are we teaching children to behave like machines?

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The Daily Nation

University of Nairobi senate resolves to discipline striking staff (Kenya)

More than 500 lecturers at the University of Nairobi may not get their March pay. The university management seeks to punish employees for defying a court order to end their month-long strike. Other public institutions of higher learning are likely to emulate the University of Nairobi in withholding salaries for the 27,000 striking staff, among them 9,000 lecturers. The university' senate, the organ in charge of academic programmes, resolved on Thursday to withhold salaries for dons who have not been teaching. University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor Peter Mbithi ordered an audit of departments to identify lecturers who have not been going to class. Deans were given up to 5pm on Friday to submit the information to Prof Mbithi's office. The Nation has learnt that most lecturers likely to miss the pay are from the faculty of engineering at Chiromo and Kikuyu campuses. Teaching was going on at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, which accounts for nearly half the student population. During the senate meeting, members expressed concern that while teaching was going on in other institutions, the University of Nairobi had been turned into the epicentre of the strike.

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Name: Maureen Agena
Program Officer -
Communications, Marketing
& Advocacy

Email: communications@ruforum.org
