

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

1. University News

[An optimistic narrative for higher education ahead \(Africa\)](#)

Currently grabbing headlines and making a stir is Harvard-based cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker's new book *Enlightenment Now*. In it Pinker argues, among other things, that on all objective measures of human progress over the long term, things are pretty much improving for Earth's inhabitants. "Almost anything that you measure when it comes to human well-being has increased over time," Pinker reportedly told students at Arizona State University just last week, citing life expectancy, general health, time for leisure, rates of literacy and access to food, among other measures. Although praised for his reliance on quantitative data, his foregrounding of science and reason, and despite his belief that progress is contingent on the decoupling of issues from political ideology, Pinker's thesis remains, as one reviewer remarked, "deeply ideological". As such, it is likely to cause stiff debate and elicit some healthy scepticism. But for all of us, it is also a highly attractive notion, perhaps buoyed by the echoes of the 'Africa Rising' narrative that emerged in response to rapid economic growth on the continent circa 2000. Criticisms of cognitive bias in Pinker's work notwithstanding, if we take access to education as a measure of progress, we can see that the Harvard man might be on to something. There is no doubt that the value of education – and higher education in particular – is not only increasingly acknowledged and embraced, but that its implementation is, well, actually happening. More people today are studying at tertiary level than at any other time in the history of the planet. Africa, despite its late start and multiple challenges, is included in this phenomenon.

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2. University World News

[International partnership solution to the bioscience gap \(Africa\)](#)

Africa continues to face major socio-economic challenges in its quest to drive economic growth, create employment opportunities and reduce poverty. Scientific advancements can accelerate development across key sectors on the continent, but this would require comprehensive planning, long-term commitment and strategic investments in tertiary education, research capacity building and funding for research and development. African governments must also lead efforts to reform and transform the tertiary education system into world-class research and teaching institutions that support creative thinking, knowledge exchange, innovation and high productivity. Presently, many universities and national research institutes in Sub-Saharan Africa lack the infrastructure, technical capacity and financial resources required to conduct world-class research. This chronic impoverishment has created a huge gap in knowledge and has limited the ability of many intelligent students in African tertiary education institutions to compete globally as well as to contribute to their country's sustainable development.

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3. Daily Monitor

Makerere enrolment reduces by 15,000 (Uganda)

The enrolment at Makerere University has reduced by 15,000 students in the last decade, according to the institution's management. The Vice Chancellor, Prof Barnabas Nawangwe, yesterday said the decision was taken 10 years ago to reduce the enrolment of undergraduate students by 10 per cent annually until the programmes (undergraduate) are all phased out at the country's oldest university to concentrate on only graduate courses. According to Prof Nawangwe, the students have since dropped to 35,000 from 50,000 since the inception of the policy in 2008. The vice chancellor's explanation follows a media briefing he had last month where he informed journalists that the University Council had decided to call off the evening programmes and continuing students would pursue their courses in the same programme uninterrupted to the end, save for the new students of academic year 2018/19. "...all new students (freshers) starting with the coming academic year 2018/2019, will be admitted to study various academic programmes at Makerere University on either the day programme from 8am to 5pm or on the afternoon programme from 2pm to 6pm. Colleges are, however, allowed to run evening programmes after filling the minimum enrolment on day and afternoon programmes," the statement read in part.

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4. Al-Fanar Media

Education in Morocco: A Plea for a Middle Way (Morocco)

The debate over the right to free education resurfaced in Morocco recently, just as it does periodically in many countries in North Africa and the Middle East. Free education for all is theoretically a right in Morocco. Nonetheless, millions of young Moroccans either never attend school; drop out along the way; or study for years only to graduate still functionally illiterate. Instead of fixing the public school system, the government has been moving toward privatization as a solution. Morocco's parliamentarians and teachers' syndicates have objected to a proposed new law that would charge some fees to higher-income families for secondary school and university. The law does not specify what that income would be, which has caused alarm among many students and their families.

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5. Daily Nation

Boys beat Girls in scramble for University places (Kenya)

Some 62,851 out of 69,151 candidates who scored a C+ and above in the 2017 Form Four national examinations have been selected to join universities under the government-sponsored programme. Education Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohamed on Monday announced that 36,945 of those selected are male while 25,906 are female. Of the 69,151 candidates, 553 opted for diploma courses, according to the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS). A further 5,747, representing 8.3 per cent of the 69,151 candidates, have not secured placement. This is because 2,128 did not apply while 3,619 applied but could not secure places as they did not meet the cluster qualifications of the courses they applied for.

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6. Daily Monitor

[More Girls Enrolling for Technical courses \(Uganda\)](#)

As evidenced in the recently released Uganda Business and Technical Examination board (UBTEB) 2017 results, there is still a disparity and an apparent attachment of gender issues in courses. According to UBTEB statistics, female candidates dominated in business related programmes while male candidates dominated technical programmes. There were 2,745 girls registered for both business diploma and certificate programmes in contrast to 660 boys on the same fields making it a difference of 61 per cent. Yet there were 3760 girls registered for both advanced and national technical certificate programmes compared to the 18,369 boys, a 66 per cent difference.

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7. INSIDE Higher ED

[A Transparent Approach to University President Selection \(Ethiopia\)](#)

Overshadowed by the country's political crisis, a positive development in the Ethiopian higher education seems to go unnoticed. Following a 2017 directive issued by the Ministry of Education (MoE), public universities have started to use a more open, competitive, and transparent process for the selection and appointment of presidents. In the past four months alone, three institutions, Bahir Dar, Debre Markos and Addis Ababa universities have gone through this process to appoint new presidents. In doing so, the universities not only advertised the position, internally and externally, they also reported the progress of the selection process on their websites and social media outlets. This is a significant departure from previous practice when university presidents were appointed by the Ministry in a more opaque process. In many ways, it is also a positive step towards the overall wellbeing of the institutions and the higher education system in general. First, open competition encourages diverse individuals interested in the job and who believe they are qualified, to apply. Addis Ababa University (AAU), for instance, received an impressive 22 completed applications.

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8. The University News

[Towards more achievable university vision statements \(Ethiopia\)](#)

Overly ambitious and unrealistic vision statements will not be able to drag Ethiopian universities higher up the regional and international ranking ladders. Instead, universities might be better off focusing more seriously on what they can achieve locally. A vision statement is regarded as a concise description of where an organisation aspires to go or what it wants to achieve. Vision statements reflect institutional priorities or promises articulated in the form of a 'vision' concerning a future desired state. As descriptive statements of what awaits an organisation at the end of its journey, vision statements should be distinguished from mere slogans or wishful thinking. This article outlines the findings from a larger study I hope to publish in future on the vision statements of Ethiopia's nine first generation public universities to ascertain their relevance and accuracy by using regional and global rankings as proxies of measurement. Ethiopia currently accommodates 37 fully-fledged public universities and over 120 private higher education institutions which attend to the higher education needs of nearly 800,000 students. The system accommodates nearly 30,000 teachers serving at these institutions.

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9. Bulawayo News

Curriculum overhaul for tertiary institutions (Zimbabwe)

THE Government has begun reviewing the curriculum framework for universities, teachers' colleges and polytechnics to align the country's higher education system with international standards, a Cabinet Minister has said. Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development Professor Amon Murwira told Sunday News that the review would see harmonisation of courses being offered at tertiary institutions. To that end, Prof Murwira, said a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was being crafted and would be out before the end of this month. He said the national qualifications framework would enable students in a particular field where possible to transfer from one tertiary institution to another and continue with their studies without difficulty. The framework, Prof Murwira said, would also ensure that qualifications attained at diploma and higher national diploma levels are considered when one enrolls for an undergraduate degree. This would also see students with prior qualifications being exempted from taking courses they would have passed in their previous studies, the professor explained.

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10. The Mail and Guardian

Embrace the ecological university (South Africa)

For more than two centuries, the distinctiveness of the university has been its emphasis on inquiry, or what leading higher education analyst Ron Barnett calls “an openness of mind and an open society”. It is this that helps us to think with optimism about a new kind of university — which Barnett refers to as an “ecological” one — one that is concerned with a real urgency towards the world and its ethical responsibility. An ecological university is one that has spaces of agency and remains on the look-out for large deficiencies in its own research and in the wider world. It also has an ethical concern to promote democratic interests to help people to understand one another, coexist and make sense of the world in which they live. To get a better understanding of how this might apply to today's universities, especially in terms of core functions such as research, teaching and learning, one has to turn to the ground-breaking work of 20th-century philosopher Martin Buber.

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11. University World News

What could a new prime minister mean for higher education? (Ethiopia)

After years of protests in its major regions and recent political crisis, on 3 April Ethiopia got a new prime minister. Dr Abiy Ahmed was elected chair of the ruling party, Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front or EPRDF, a few days before he was sworn in as prime minister. In his close to 40 minute inaugural speech, Abiy outlined the major areas of emphasis for his government. Interestingly enough, the quality of education was one of them. He underscored that the key to solving the country's multiple problems was to be found “in education and only in education”. Despite the achievements made in expanding education, Abiy noted, there is a lot of work remaining in terms of improving quality. He particularly highlighted the lack of quality in vocational and higher learning institutions as a major hurdle to the knowledge and skills graduates acquire. After years of protests in its major regions and recent political crisis, on 3 April Ethiopia got a new prime minister. Dr Abiy

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12. University World News

[Predatory conferences: A case of academic cannibalism \(Global\)](#)

Less than 20 years after appearing in the groves of academe, predatory conferences now outnumber legitimate congresses held by scholarly societies. Today, one can attend multiple predatory conferences every month of the year in nearly any major city, from Tokyo to Toronto and Sydney to Helsinki. Competition between predatory companies has become so fierce that even smaller cities have become targets. There are even conference alert websites devoted entirely to promoting predatory events. The sheer number of predatory conferences, sometimes called questionable conferences, combined with the increasing sophistication of the organising companies, means any unknown conference should be viewed as predatory until proven otherwise. **What is a predatory conference?** To be classified as predatory, the conference organiser needs to meet three criteria: the organiser holds low quality academic meetings for the primary aim of making money – not supporting scholarship; there is no effective peer review, allowing anyone to purchase a speaking slot; and the organiser employs deceit, the most common forms being false claims of peer review, hiding the company headquarters’ true location and concealing the for-profit nature of the company. With a few exceptions, this article will avoid naming specific predatory conference organisers for two reasons. First, many companies closely follow what is written about them and quickly make cosmetic changes to their websites in an attempt to escape the predatory label. Second, companies frequently change names or rebrand their conferences.

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Note to University Public Relations Officers:

To share news/events about your Universities, contact Ms Maureen Agena, Program Officer - Communications, Marketing & Advocacy, below.

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