

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

1. University World News

Centres of Excellence project bequeaths research hubs (Africa)

The Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) plans to establish regional research hubs in at least four universities that are hosting the Eastern and Southern African Higher Education Centres of Excellence (ACE II) at a cost of US\$2 million. In a move that will be preceded by the setting up of incubation centres in the institutions, later transiting into research centres, selected universities will each receive up to US\$250,000 to help them set up the hubs. The amount will go towards improvement of infrastructure and for supporting selected projects. The incubation centres, also to be known as “learning factories” will bring universities and industry together, providing graduate students and faculty with a platform to commercialise their research and academic output, says the IUCEA. The four regional research hubs will represent all the disciplines of the World Bank-funded initiative, including industry, agriculture, health, and education and statistics, which have been identified as priority areas for the socio-economic growth of target countries. “Through establishment of incubation centres, we aim to develop the region’s four best ACEs into regional research hubs that will demonstrate the pathways for the transformation of research outcomes into innovative products or policies,” the IUCEA said in last month’s edition of the ACE II newsletter. Universities to host the centres will be picked competitively, according to a call issued by the regional universities body, and will depend on existing facilities, including laboratories, working spaces and offices and internet infrastructure, among other criteria. The quality and volume of education and research produced by an institution, and its proximity to an industrial nucleus, or its established relationship with industry will also be a factor, as will ability to co-finance the incubation centre, and clear strategies demonstrating sustainability of a hub beyond ACE II’s five years’ lifespan. “Implementers of ACE II Project should strive to ensure that research findings and innovation outputs generated are turned into tangible and impactful products and services for the socio-economic development of society,” according to IUCEA.

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2. University World News

Seeding Labs – A catalytic opportunity to drive discovery (Africa)

The discovery by a Harvard molecular biology doctoral student of troves of unused and underused scientific laboratory equipment in a university basement was the impetus behind a project which has today brought equipment worth over US\$30 million to 63 institutions in 33 countries around the world. Nina Dudnik, the original thinker behind the Seeding Labs concept said when she found the equipment, she realised that someone, somewhere could make good use of it, with the potential to conduct cutting-edge research. “The mission of Seeding Labs, broadly, is about ensuring that talented people wherever they are in the world have the opportunity to drive discovery,” Dudnik told University World News. The Instrumental Access programme of Seeding Labs, a non-profit organisation based in Boston, connects universities and research institutes in developing countries with high-quality surplus lab equipment provided by donors. The organisation celebrated its 10-year anniversary earlier this year. Equipment as catalyst: “We start with the equipment because it’s a catalyst. We have seen this

over the years – it catalyses transformation across institutions of science,” she said. According to Dudnik, one or two years after receiving equipment, the curriculum of the institution tends to change and improve because hands-on training of students improves. “Masters and PhD students can finish their dissertations, lecturers can complete their research that was previously stuck and they don’t have to leave their country to conduct their analysis,” said Dudnik. She said the equipment also gives researchers the infrastructure to expand collaborations both at home and abroad. “We have seen this turning into new funding for research. And what we are seeing, which is very exciting now, are the actual products coming out of research that’s being done, including a few that have provisional patents,” she said.

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3. University World News

[Discord over proposed changes to education trust fund \(Nigeria\)](#)

Public and private tertiary education institutions are at loggerheads over a proposal to widen access to the country’s Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) to include private institutions. The fund is currently responsible for managing and disbursing the education tax to public tertiary institutions. According to informed sources, some key members of the National Assembly have been successfully lobbied by private universities to ensure that TETFund law is amended to accommodate tertiary institutions. Thus two separate bills proposing the amendments have scaled through the first and second readings. These bills seek to ensure that the TETFund allocates to private universities about 10% of the 2% of all company taxes collected; and 17.5% of the taxes for federal tertiary health institutions and teaching hospitals in the country. However, controversy over the plans has prompted the Senate Committee on Tertiary Education – which continues to receive memoranda from both sides – to schedule another public hearing on the complex issue. There have been four attempts in the last five years to amend the laws relating to the fund. In a rare show of solidarity, during the first public hearing, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the Committee of Vice-Chancellors (CVC), and the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the head of TETFund rejected moves by private tertiary institutions to become integral beneficiaries of the fund.

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4. Daily Monitor

[Universities need to communicate better \(Uganda\)](#)

Universities generate a lot of knowledge through faculty and students’ research, which is needed for society and national development. Further, due to the increasing demand, universities are also engaged in research for development and community outreach, both of which are beneficial for national development. Universities also provide a lot of social services to society. However, the visibility of African universities’ contribution to society development, and policy formulation in particular, is not that visible to the general public, especially in the area of policy. This is partly because university scientists and researchers have challenges in communicating the information they gather and the knowledge they generate for informing decision making and consequently national development. Yet the knowledge based on independent, quality-assured information such as that from universities empowers people and helps them to develop ideas, engage in discussions, influence policy and make decisions that can improve the quality of life in general. The demand for easy to

understand, up-to-date information is growing. This demand comes from policy makers, researchers, students, media and from civil societies, who are increasingly urging for full transparency on information from both public and private Universities. Alongside this development, the rapid evolution in new information technologies provides tools to communicate more effectively.

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5. University World News

Meeting basic needs – A first step to student success (South Africa)

While research shows that funded students have a better success rate because their basic needs are more likely to be met, they still need a range of other support mechanisms and structures to ensure they achieve their potential at South African universities. Student analytics – which provides a clearer picture of student needs – can help. Opening the fourth Siyaphumelela 2018 Conference in Johannesburg on 12 June, Minister of Higher Education and Training Naledi Pandor said student analytics can help to develop a more finely-tuned understanding of student needs, and help governments to put data-informed initiatives in place to better support students toward success. Siyaphumelela ('We Succeed') is a programme coordinated by the South African Institute for Distance Education and funded by the Kresge Foundation, aimed at improving capacity at South African universities to use data analytics to improve student success. Its annual conference aims to promote a national discourse on student success initiatives in the five partner institutions: The University of the Witwatersrand, the University of Pretoria, Nelson Mandela University, the University of the Free State and the Durban University of Technology. As the only conference focusing on the use of analytics to promote student success in Sub-Saharan Africa, the conference provides a platform for international and local experts and practitioners to discuss evidence-based practices and national systemic interventions aimed at student success. This year's gathering focused on basic needs and student success, leadership for student success, and design for student success. Pandor said the Department of Higher Education and Training's latest 2015 undergraduate cohort study published on 31 March 2018 makes it clear that funded students have a better success rate. "Students who are inadequately funded experience great challenges in regard to food security, suitable accommodation, and ability to obtain textbooks and other resources.

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6. University World News

How do we prepare graduates who can serve society? (Kenya)

Educationalists have called upon Kenyan universities to teach critical thinking skills and include social justice and transformation in their curriculum, in order to prepare graduates to serve their societies selflessly and diligently. "We are challenged and threatened as a nation by individuals and young people who are eager to have a [senior] position today ... Tomorrow, either they are at the top [politically] or are billionaires, working to the disadvantage of the people they are supposed to serve," Professor Leah Marangu, former vice-chancellor at the Africa Nazarene University in Nairobi, told delegates at a recent conference in Nairobi, Kenya. Called 'Touching Hearts, Teaching Minds and Transforming Lives', the three-day conference was held from 20-23 May and brought together scholars from Malawi, Kenya, Zimbabwe and the United States of America. It was held at Tangaza University College in Nairobi. Marangu said there were gaps in the teaching tools employed in Kenyan

universities. The existing teaching curricula, she said, fails to inspire students to find solutions for quality of life improvements, such as boosting food security, combating hunger, drug abuse and family violence, and stressing the value of human dignity, social cohesion and harmony. “We must review and update our curriculum to meet social and economic challenges. We must weave values into the curriculum to produce individuals capable of permeating the future society with moral integrity as they serve society,” Marangu told University World News, adding that students should be taught to have courage and speak out whenever they see an injustice or feel oppressed. She said existing evils and social disharmony had emerged partly because students do not embrace the need for moral ethics and social norms to standardise behaviour. She called for higher learning systems to inculcate a sense of nationhood, common humanity and good neighbourliness, as well as skills of reconciliation and conflict resolution.

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7. University World News

[Minister denounces university entrance fraud \(Angola\)](#)

Maria do Rosário Bragança Sambo, Angola's higher education and science minister, has denounced officials' fraudulent malpractice in student university entrance processes. Sambo, who was formerly dean of the medical faculty and associate professor at Katyavala Bwila University, Benguela, said the use of fraud, cronyism and nepotism for a student to gain a place at university was a “widespread evil” which all of society should fight against, reported the Angola Press Agency (ANGOP). Concluding a visit to the Cuanza Sul academic region, Sambo said it was “unacceptable that those students with the best results are not selected for university entrance because of the negative influences of a number of senior university managers”. “My ministry is working to improve work conditions and salaries of university officials and teachers so they won't be corrupted,” ANGOP quoted her as saying. On a separate occasion, Sambo highlighted the need for 10,500 extra university teachers for the country's 24 public higher education institutions. She recognised the situation was critical and that the employment of expatriate academics, who were mostly Cubans, was not enough to meet demand, reported ANGOP.

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8. University World News

[How well is South African science doing? \(South Africa\)](#)

When assessing the performance of any national science system one needs to be clear about the ‘performance criteria’ as well as the underlying data that are being used in such an assessment. As far as the underlying data are concerned, we use the Web of Science database. [In our counting we confine ourselves to the Web of Science Core Collection which consists of three citation databases: the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI), the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI).] We confine our assessment to South Africa's publications in two categories: ‘articles’ and ‘review articles’. This means that we exclude documents such as books, book chapters and conference proceedings in our counts. We assess South Africa's bibliometric performance according to three indicators: publication output, international collaboration and citation visibility or impact. We have selected these three indicators as they are conventionally used in bibliometric analyses and do capture some of the most important aspects of scientific production.

However, it is also important to emphasise that they do not capture other important dimensions of scientific performance. Dimensions such as the relevance and quality of a country's science, the degree to which science impacts on society and the profile of the human resource base of scientific production (to name only three) are not addressed in this communication.

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9. University World News

[Perils of unregulated privatisation in public universities \(Ethiopia\)](#)

While the private higher education sector in Ethiopia continues to be demonised for its commercial motives, the issue of partial privatisation in the public sector has, in general, not received the scholarly attention it deserves. However, the increasing evidence that is now available about the growing privatisation tendencies in Ethiopia's public higher education sector demands a closer understanding of its features and implications. Ethiopia illustrates both of the common routes to partial privatisation of public universities. The first is the importing of management ideas and practices from the business world in order to make the public sector more businesslike, while the second is about increased effort to raise private (non-governmental) income. This article focuses on the latter – probably the most impactful of the privatisation measures. In Ethiopia higher education was for far too long totally free of charge. Neither tuition fees nor fees for services such as food and lodging were required from students. However, the last two decades have seen a fundamental policy shift in government position away from the exclusive funding of university education towards exploiting private means to support public missions. Privatisation tendencies have been motivated in particular by the general economic policies of the incumbent government and its 1994 Education and Training Policy (ETP) that allowed increased cost-sharing beyond secondary education and encouraged institutions to generate their own income. Echoing the ETP's directions, the Higher Education Proclamation (HEP 2009) underscored the need for diversifying public university income through tuition, research, innovation, consultancy, donations and other activities. Public institutions are encouraged to outsource some of their services and set up an income fund and-or enterprise that functions independently as a business entity. An expansion in higher student numbers and demand for higher education led to the introduction of cost-sharing in the public sector in 2003-04. Although the government's capacity to collect the range of fees from graduates is still a challenge, it nonetheless plans to boost the current cost-sharing scheme from 15% to 25% by 2019-20, so as to be able to cover as much as 20% of the total cost of the higher education sector by 2020.

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10. University World News

[Unprepared graduates are raising our costs, say employers \(Kenya\)](#)

Kenyan employers are warning of surging business costs arising from the hiring of new under-prepared university graduates even as the country grapples with an oversupply of university leavers. The Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) – a lobby group for all major corporate organisations – says in its latest survey that at least 70% of entry-level recruits require a refresher course in order to start to deliver in their new jobs. As a result, they take longer than expected to become productive, nearly doubling staff costs in a majority of organisations.

“We are facing a complex situation that is increasingly driving up the cost of doing business. The university training focuses more on academic qualifications as opposed to imparting specific skills and competencies,” said Jacqueline Mugo, the executive director at FKE. The FKE survey shows that over 90% of job seekers have more education qualifications than are required for entry-level jobs, a situation that is being driven by an oversupply of university graduates. “If an employer advertises for a clerical job, for instance, over 60% of applicants will be graduates. This is distorting the labour markets as we end up with people hired in positions they don’t have passion for, making them less productive,” Mugo told reporters in Nairobi last week. Kenya is producing at least 10,000 graduates annually, government data shows. Educationists and employers say there is a glaring mismatch between the country’s developmental goals and university programmes and tough decisions are needed.

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11. University World News

[University-level upgrade for teacher-training colleges \(Ghana\)](#)

All Colleges of Education are to be upgraded to University Colleges and will offer a four-year Bachelor of Education degree with effect from the 2018-19 academic year, as part of efforts to improve the quality of teacher training in the country, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo has announced. This is the second upgrade for education colleges in the last decade: in 2012, the Colleges of Education Act (Act 847) was passed to give legal backing to the conversion of Teacher Training Colleges to Colleges of Education which were then placed under the control of the National Council for Tertiary Education, the government agency responsible for the regulation of tertiary education institutions. Speaking at the 170th anniversary celebrations of the Presbyterian College of Education in Akropong in the Eastern Region on 17 June, Akufo-Addo said: “These colleges will, initially, be affiliated with the University of Cape Coast and, subsequently, to other public universities. This means that, eventually, a first degree will be the minimum requirement for teaching at any level of our education system.” Currently, many teachers who complete the three-year Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) at the Colleges of Education go on, later, to do a two-year top-up first degree by distance learning at the University of Cape Coast – a public collegiate research university located in Cape Coast, Ghana. This means that, in addition to the extra amount of money spent on getting a degree, it takes trainee teachers not less than five years to get a degree. “With the introduction of the four-year Bachelor of Education degree, you would now obtain your first degree at the end of your schooling. This ensures that you enter the teaching service as university graduates, with an increase in your earning capacity,” Akufo-Addo said. Stressing the importance of teachers, he said all successful modern nations that have experienced extraordinary results in the formation of human capital and economic development, such as Singapore, Finland, South Korea and Canada, have shown that teacher quality is the single most important determinant of their success.

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12. University World News

[Are our graduates ready for artificial intelligence? \(South Africa\)](#)

The first industrial revolution saw the emergence of the steam engine and iron and textile industries. Electricity, gas and oil, the telephone and telegraph, automobile and plane were introduced as part of the second industrial revolution. The third industrial evolution was the era of electronics, the computer and nuclear energy. In the fourth industrial revolution, artificial intelligence or AI (which can be described as machine intelligence) has made an impact in industry, education and society. Some of the first contributions include diagnostic, planning and design systems, for example, the scheduling of jobs on machines. As the field matured, AI has successfully been used in logistics for vehicle routing, (determining the most cost-effective routes for delivery vehicles), airplane landing and financial forecasting. More recently it has made an impact in smart cities and mining, in areas such as autonomous vehicles and energy consumption. For example, this resulted in a 40% reduction in energy consumption at Google server centres. Similarly, an Australian mining company, Rio Tinto, was able to improve productivity by 10% with the use of driverless vehicles at its mines. The role of AI in the broadcasting and media industry is continually growing with current contributions in network optimisation, data analytics of customer viewership and content management. The Wimbledon 2017 highlights segment was created using AI techniques. IBM used AI software to compile the ultimate highlights package for viewers at home: its software picked up the crowd cheering, players' facial expressions and point scoring to produce a two-minute riveting highlights package. AI has also proven to be effective in various facets of computer security such as network intrusion detection and malware detection. Interestingly, it has also contributed to the software industry by automating the process of software engineering which usually requires many person hours when done manually. The processes automated include software testing, software debugging, software optimisation and determining system requirements.

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Name: Maureen Agena	Corporate Communication & Advocacy Officer	Email: communications@ruforum.org
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