

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

1. Mail and Guardian

Science will unlock Africa's potential — if it is funded (Africa)

Africa's leading scientists, innovators and policymakers met in Kigali, Rwanda, in March this year to brainstorm solutions to an increasingly pressing problem: the poor quality of science on the continent. Any good leader knows that scientific discovery and innovation fuel progress, facilitate development and can tackle issues such as food insecurity, water shortages and climate change. But most African governments are failing to fund research and development (R&D) adequately. According to the Unesco Institute for Statistics, countries in sub-Saharan Africa spend, on average, just 0.5% of their gross domestic product (GDP) on this. In the West, the figure is closer to 3%. This disparity underscores the development challenges Africans face. Africa is home to 15% of the world's population and 5% of its GDP but accounts for a paltry 1.3% of total research spending. Moreover, African inventors hold just 0.1% of the world's patents, meaning that, even when money is spent on science, innovation and research, the findings rarely translate into solutions for the continent's most immediate challenges. These trends are not universal; some African governments are investing heavily in science-led innovation. In South Africa, for example, authorities have pledged to double R&D spending by 2020 to 1.5% of GDP. This follows a 2016 commitment by African heads of state to increase science and technology budgets to at least 1% of GDP by 2025. A handful of countries — including Kenya, Rwanda, and Senegal — are working hard to reach this funding threshold. Africa also benefits from generous research-related aid and international support. One of the top donors, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has invested more than \$450-million in African science initiatives over the past decade. Projects include a \$306-million programme to boost crop yields and a \$62.5-million grant to improve health outcomes. These and other funding streams have helped African researchers to develop drought-resistant crops, produce vaccines for infectious diseases such as Ebola, and expand opportunities for science and technology education. Unfortunately, many African governments have limited resources to fund programmes that could build on these gains. A new, more collaborative approach to African science is urgently needed. Africa's leaders have pooled their science resources before. In 2003, the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development began implementing a continent-wide strategy "to develop and use science and technology for the socioeconomic transformation of the continent and its integration into the world economy". It was an ambitious goal that yielded early results. Between 2005 and 2014, continent-wide spending on R&D increased and research output more than doubled in many countries.

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2. University World News

Wider access to higher education needs a mind-set shift (Malawi)

At Malawi's first international conference on higher education last month, Professor Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, vice-chancellor of the Nairobi-based United States International University – Africa, suggested there was need for caution in the Malawian government's decision to "unbundle" the University of Malawi and turn its four constituent colleges into stand-alone universities. Zeleza said the move went against global trends: universities the world over are consolidating their institutions, growing their

enrolment numbers, and expanding their reach. The decision to “dismantle” the University of Malawi, as he saw it, went in the opposite direction. Zeleza said Malawi had the “dubious distinction of having the lowest university enrolment rate in the world,” with less than 1% of college-age Malawians attending university. The African average was 12%, while the global average was 33%. He added, in a personal conversation later, that in developed countries university enrolment rates were above 60%. It is instructive to examine the factors that have given Malawi this unenviable distinction. It is a legacy of missionary education from the 1870s, of colonialism from the 1890s, and of one-party dictatorship from 1964 to 1994. When Malawi won its independence from British rule in 1964, there was no university in the country, save for a few missionary teacher training and technical colleges. Secondary school education did not start in Malawi until 1941 when the colonial government opened Blantyre Secondary School. By the time of independence in 1964, there were only four full secondary schools in the country. The pace of development in post-independence Malawi was rapid, but looking back from a 21st century perspective, it was not rapid enough. The University of Malawi was established in October 1964, three months after independence. It remained the only university in the country for the next quarter of a century, when the African Bible College opened in 1988. The second public university, Mzuzu, would not have its first intake until 1999. Currently Malawi has four public universities, whose total student population is about 20,000. The University of Malawi, the jewel of higher education in Malawi in the words of Zeleza, has about 13,000 students. Compare that to a similar flagship university which opened around the same time in the region, the University of Nairobi. It has 80,000 students. There are now just over 28 recognised and registered private universities in Malawi, with a new one opening up every so often.

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3. University World News'

Bad politics and the paradox of university rankings (Zimbabwe)

Zimbabwe’s higher education sector finds itself caught in a paradox: the country has one of the highest literacy rates in Africa at 92%, but its universities perform dismally in both continental and international rankings. Pressure is mounting on the post-Robert Mugabe government to intervene. In an editorial published on 21 May titled “Bring back the glory in Zim's universities”, regional newspaper the Southern Times, said it was high time the authorities worked to ensure the country’s institutions of higher learning regained their lost glory. “Something is certainly not right and the sooner the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education moves in to address this, the better,” the editorial said. The newspaper said it was a “shame” that the University of Zimbabwe could be ranked lower than universities in countries such as Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and even Sudan – more so given the fact that the country is still said to have the highest literacy rates on the continent. The University of Zimbabwe, the country’s flagship university founded in the 1960s, has long lost its spot among the elite league of African universities. According to the 2018 list compiled by Australia-based university ranking organisation uniRank, the university is ranked number 59 out of 200 universities in Africa, with Zimbabwe’s Midlands State University following at 148. Eight South African universities dominate the top 10 with the University of Pretoria occupying the top spot, followed by the University of Cape Town. The University of Nairobi in Kenya and the American University in Cairo, Egypt take ninth and 10th positions respectively. No Zimbabwean university is in the top 50. Last year, University of Zimbabwe Vice-chancellor Professor Levi Nyagura announced that the institution had set its sights on becoming

one of the top 10 universities on the African continent by the year 2020, stressing that student enrolment at the learning institution had grown by more than 700%, from 2,280 in 1980 to 17,000 in 2017.

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4. University World News

[Universities' partnership to protect fragile ecosystems \(Africa-Europe\)](#)

Six universities in five countries have launched REFORM, a five-year partnership for international higher education and research harmonisation and postgraduate student mobility in the field of fragile ecosystems. The partner institutions of REFORM – the Regional Academic Exchange for Enhanced Skills in Fragile Ecosystems Management in Africa – are: the National University of Benin; Mzuzu University, Malawi; Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique; Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD), Senegal; Makerere University and Uganda Martyrs University, Uganda, according to SciDevNet. Between them they will offer postgraduate programmes in agroforestry, ecology and adaptation; taxonomy, biodiversity, ethnobotany and natural resources conservation and valorisation; agroecology and food systems; forest, ecosystem, environment and natural resource management. UCAD is coordinating the project, which is financed by the European Union with the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences as its European technical partner, reported the Agence de Presse Sénégalaise, or APS. REFORM was officially launched at UCAD in Dakar in June, under the leadership of Mary Teuw Niane, Senegal's minister of higher education, research and innovation, reported APS. Its aim is “to educate students at masters and doctorate levels in the management of fragile ecosystems, and should enable the internationalisation and harmonisation of curricula on the management of fragile ecosystems”, and “the creation of a regional skills infrastructure for environmental management and food safety”

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5. University World News

[First digital production laboratory opens in Kinshasa \(Democratic Republic of Congo\)](#)

The Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) and the Orange Foundation DRC have launched the Democratic Republic of the Congo's first digital production laboratory. Lisungi FabLab, located at AUF's Campus Numérique Francophone (French-language digital campus) in Kinshasa, is primarily intended to support the disadvantaged youth in getting employment, but students and researchers can also use the state-of-the-art technological facilities, said the AUF. The creation of Lisungi follows an agreement between the AUF and the Orange Foundation DRC, signed in March 2017, to improve youth employment prospects and professional skills. The first such laboratory, Ongola FabLab, was set up the following month in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Lisungi, the partnership's second FabLab, provides cutting-edge technology and equipment including 3D printer and scanner, sewing machine, digital embroidery machine and laser burner, for the implementation of ideas and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge through digitisation, said AUF. Although Lisungi FabLab will give priority to young people and women who are disadvantaged, AUF said students, lecturers and researchers could also benefit from the laboratory, as well as start-up enterprises and artists. The agency quoted Professor Alain Ondoua, regional director of AUF for Central Africa and the Great Lakes, as saying: “The establishment of AUF in Kinshasa, which now accommodates a FabLab, is the realisation of change

within the vast network of French-language digital campuses in the world. "These new-generation campuses, known by their French acronym CNEUF (Campus du Nouvel Espace Universitaire Francophone), are designed for the dissemination and acquisition of knowledge, the socio-economic promotion of knowledge, expertise and interpersonal skills.

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6. University World News

Francophone universities to benefit from digital fund (Africa)

Universities and higher education institutions located in African French-speaking countries are set to benefit from the launch of a digital development fund and digital library which aims to promote the development of the online Francophone higher education space. "The digital fund will support infrastructure development, capacity building and access to broadband internet for higher education and research institutions," Juma Shabani, former director of development, coordination and monitoring of UNESCO programmes with a special focus on Africa, told University World News. "The development of [the] digital library of Francophone university space (DLFUS) will improve the sharing of online resources." The new initiative is outlined in a declaration adopted at the third conference of ministers of higher education of the Francophone countries held under the theme "Digital finance in the Francophone university space" in Marrakesh, Morocco from 20-22 June.

The conference was organised by Morocco's Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Professional Training, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, or IOF, and the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie – an international association based in Canada that brings together 812 French-speaking universities in 104 countries, and one of the world's largest higher education and research associations. According to IOF figures, 55% of the world's French-speakers live in Africa. As a result of population growth, the IOF estimates that the number of French speakers will rise to over 700 million by 2050, 80% of whom will be in Africa. DLFUS is a new version of a virtual repository of educational resources launched at the 2016 second meeting of Francophone ministers of higher education, held in Mali's capital Bamako. DLFUS provides resources in deploying digital technology to French-speaking higher education institutions, from ideas for strategy development to evaluation and implementation, for all people in universities and other higher education and research institutions – policy-makers, students, lecturers, managers, engineers, technicians and administrative staff – who are interested in and affected by the use of digital technology in education. At the time of the DLFUS launch, the portal had collected nearly 2,068 in its Atlas of French-speaking expertise and 87,298 university resources. "The digital fund will have a major impact on the development of higher education in French-speaking Africa as it will help to overcome several challenges including improving affordable access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) and broadband, strengthening academic staff's skills in the use of ICTs in teaching and research, and building capacity in the production and use of massive open online courses (MOOCs)," said Shabani who attended the launch of the digital fund in Morocco as a member of the Burundi delegation. Shabani said in his opinion, the conference should also have addressed the use of ICTs in dealing with the massification of student enrolments, promoting lifelong learning and improving youth employability.

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7. University World News

Urbanisation conference calls for timely research (Africa)

African academic research on sustainable urbanisation has not kept pace with the rapid economic, environmental and policy changes that define sustainable development, according to experts at the Sustainable African Cities conference held last week (3-6 July) in Accra, Ghana. The conference, which pooled delegates from all over the world to share knowledge and ideas on urban development, was planned and organised by the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences in collaboration with the German National Academy of Sciences, the Network of African Science Academies and the Academy of Science of South Africa, with funding from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany. Some of the universities represented at the conference include University of Ghana; Moi University and Great Lakes University of Kenya; University of Cape Town and University of Pretoria, South Africa; University of Bayreuth and University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany; University of Ilorin, Nigeria; and Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. Delegates identified an urgent leadership role for universities in respect of issues such as climate change, housing, food security and transport. "We need timely research and innovation from universities to help address challenges affecting humanity in African cities," said Kwabena Agyei Agyepong, a fellow of the Ghana Institution of Engineers. Agyei said that intellectuals from African universities are expected to give practical solutions to be used in policy-making aimed at improving livelihoods. Professor Edgar Pieterse, the founding director of the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town, said there was need for Africa to reposition its research to inform decisions and policy-making, especially at national and regional levels. Pieterse, who is also the holder of the National Research Foundation's South African Research Chair in Urban Policy, observed that despite relatively high gross domestic product growth since 2000 in Africa, the continent still experiences high rates of unemployment. This called for research to understand its causes and to provide solutions, he said. In an interview with University World News, Pieterse said that there was a rapid uptake of research and production of new knowledge, especially in the private sector and even the public sector, but universities lag behind in terms of producing timely knowledge on issues currently affecting humanity in urban centres. "Most of our universities work on the same topic for too long and produce results that are out of sync with the current trends and emerging issues in urbanisation," said Pieterse. However, he acknowledged the efforts to revamp urbanisation research in Africa led by the African Research Universities Alliance group on sustainable urbanisation, African Urban Research Initiative and the Association of African Planning Schools.

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8. The Ethiopian Herald

Ministry preparing higher education road map (Ethiopia)

The Nation is now working tirelessly on preparing a Higher Education Road map that would generate qualified graduates that go along with the fast economic growth, Ministry of Education announced. The Ministry State Minister Adviser Yibeltal Ayalew told The Ethiopia Herald that: "The preparation of the road map is underway with local and foreign experts including people drawn from various sectors." Shaping higher education system is vital in human capital development of Ethiopia as it is aspiring to be one of low middle income countries by 2025, thus, at this juncture , producing competent graduates for our economy is the call of the day, he stated. He also said the 25 old- education and training policy had paved the way for building human capital that would actualize nation renaissance.

As to him, the current development trajectory and trend in higher education, which resulted in the need for highly skilled workforce and a rapid increase in the number institutions of higher learning have necessitated the road map. "The future 15- year road map is expected to reform the structure, governance and managerial systems in higher education and human resource development through increasing access to higher education."

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9. University World News

[University staff union threatens to sue over deductions \(Kenya\)](#)

Kenya's Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) has threatened to go to court if the ministry of education does not take immediate action against the higher learning institutions in the country that are reported to be deducting from their employees' salaries illegally without remitting deductions to the relevant institutions. UASU Secretary-General Constantine Wasonga told University World News the union has petitioned the National Assembly education committee, Senate education committee and cabinet secretaries of National Treasury and Education to take immediate action over the audit report findings. Failure to do so would result in UASU proceeding to court to press for action, he said. "The ministry of education and the others we have petitioned have 14 days, effective from June 27 since the petition was filed, to take necessary action," said Wasonga. Last month the ministry of education released an audit report showing that some public universities in the country were deducting billions of shillings from their employees' salaries and not regularly remitting the money to relevant agencies like the Kenya Revenue Authority, National Social Security Fund, National Hospital Insurance Fund, retirement benefit schemes and co-operative societies. The amount the institutions have been deducting illegally from the employees' salaries is alleged to total approximately US\$100 million. The report said the deductions were either not remitted to required institutions or were not remitted within the specified time frame. "The universities have been withholding the money illegally and spending it elsewhere at the expense of their staff," said the report.

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10. University World News

[New association formed to advance interests of His Excellency \(Malawi\)](#)

Malawian universities and colleges have formed an association aimed at providing a forum for their shared interests and advancing higher education in the country. The announcement was made on Friday 29 June at the end of Malawi's first international conference on higher education held at Sunbird Nkopola Lodge, in the lakeshore district of Mangochi. The three-day conference was organised by Malawi's four public universities, its private universities under their umbrella body the Association of Private Universities in Malawi, the National Council for Higher Education, the Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and a group of individuals operating as Friends of Higher Education in Malawi. The theme for the conference was "Higher Education in the 21st Century". Chairperson of the organising committee, Bill Mvalo, announced the formation of an association of universities and colleges in Malawi. He said a steering committee had been formed, comprising representatives from public and private universities and colleges, and other stakeholders. The steering committee, to be convened by Mvalo, will be responsible for settling on a proper name for the association, and laying out plans and procedures for

the association to become functional. Giving the first of three keynote addresses at the conference, Professor Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, vice-chancellor of the Nairobi-based United States International University – Africa (USIU-A), said two megatrends that were going to determine Africa’s development trajectory in the 21st century were the continent’s youth bulge and the changing nature of work. He said the two megatrends were connected by the issue of employability, “the thread that will weave or unravel the fabric of the continent’s future, enabling it to achieve or abort the enduring historic and humanistic project for development, democracy and self-determination”. Zeleza observed that although universities do not simply exist for economic reasons or return on investment, employability was “at the heart of the value proposition of university education; it is its most compelling promise and unforgiving performance indicator”. Titled “Rethinking the value proposition of higher education: the challenge of employability”, Zeleza’s address noted that the issue of employability was not a problem for African universities alone; universities, governments and employers in the developed world were also grappling with it.

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11. The Standard Media

[Pan African University releases inaugural PhD cohort \(Kenya\)](#)

The Pan African University Institute for Basic Sciences, Technology and Innovation has graduated the first batch of PhD students admitted in March 2015. The 14 candidates drawn from 8 countries were crowned during the Institute’s third convocation ceremony; held on Friday June 29, 2018. At the event, additional 32 master’s degrees were conferred, bringing the total number of graduands drawn from 19 African countries to 46. The graduation of the inaugural batch of doctorate candidates as well as the crowning of the third masters cohort is a significant milestone in PAUSTI’s bid to produce qualified human resources in the areas of mathematics, molecular biology, engineering and biotechnology. The third PAUSTI graduation was held alongside that of the host institution - Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT); which was marking its 31st convocation ceremony. Speaking at the joint graduation ceremony, JKUAT Chancellor Prof. Geoffrey Maloiy urged the graduands to deploy their knowledge and provide innovative answers to pressing challenges facing the continent. In a speech, Kenya’s Education Cabinet Secretary, Amina Mohamed lauded the PAU implementing partners; reiterating government’s commitment towards successful implementation of PAUSTI. “The graduation constitutes a milestone in the African Union’s dream to unite the continent through higher education and research,” Amb. Amina said. The CS was represented by Zeinab Hussein, Principal Secretary, State Department of Post-Training and Skills Development. Pan African University Council President, Prof. Pierre Dominique Nzinnzi said that through proper adoption of science and technology, Africa could achieve its cultural and social transformation.

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12. University World News

[His Excellency must look inwards before turning outwards – Minister \(Zimbabwe\)](#)

Zimbabwe’s Higher and Tertiary Education Minister Professor Amon Murwira has challenged institutions of higher learning to adopt international best practices and raise their overall institutional quality, including student accommodation, as a first step towards the development of a national institutional framework for the internationalisation of higher education. In reference to the squalid

conditions in which many students reside due to chronic shortages of campus accommodation, Murwira told a conference, held this week in Harare and focused on internationalisation of the sector, that the system needs to construct infrastructure that conforms to international standards before it can invite students and staff as part of internationalisation initiatives. “We are also saying if you want to be truly international, we cannot have our students studying in holes. Surely you cannot claim to be international when your students are sleeping 10 to a room ... Infrastructure development is a very important component of internationalisation,” said Murwira. Murwira said the country’s higher and tertiary education system must also have predictable order, be transparent and harmonised. “We no longer want an opaque system. If you want to be trusted, be transparent,” he said. The minister said the higher education sector can raise billions of dollars and build its own infrastructure following renewed investor interest in the sector and responsible deployment of available resources such as the Zimbabwe Manpower Development Fund. “I know that we are going to raise billions of dollars and the higher and tertiary education sector shall be an area of growth in the economy, creating infrastructure, innovations, economic opportunities and jobs for export. I’m dreaming of a future where the sector becomes the prime export industry.” He said when the country has transparent education systems, relevant skills, infrastructure that is top-notch and has adopted international best practices in everything it does, then it was ready for the world.

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