

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

1. University World News

Experts weigh in on higher education challenges (Africa)

A selection of experts and scholars in African higher education share their views on the key challenges and trends facing higher education in the upcoming year. Tertiary education is an essential driver of economic and social development in all African nations. Skilled human capital and a strong research base are not only key elements of a country's economic growth strategy, but they also determine its capacity to attain the Sustainable Development Goals. African nations must formulate a clear vision for the future of tertiary education, put in place favourable governance frameworks, and mobilise resources to overcome the challenges facing their tertiary education systems: poor access and equity; inadequate quality and relevance; and insufficient research and knowledge transfer. They must also overcome political rivalries and mistrust to promote South-South cooperation and pool their resources in support of regional projects, such as the African Centers of Excellence. The slow verification of qualifications has been a major challenge. The situation has been aggravated by refugees fleeing both natural and man-made crises, who have nothing to prove their academic and professional qualifications. Degree mills and degrees offered by institutions that are not accredited have also become a major challenge. National qualifications frameworks for African countries need to be harmonised and there should be mutual trust among member countries. There is need for a continental database for African universities where all student qualifications are deposited on the cloud with passwords and different levels of administrative powers controlling access.

For more details, click [here](#)

2. The Daily Monitor

Formula of making money from sunflower farming (Uganda)

Bukedea cattle market, a dusty market centre located off the Bukedea-Kumi Road in Bukedea Town, is just a stone throw away from the ancient rocks, making it a potential tourist centre. The smell of roast chicken wafts in the air as I venture into the centre. Chicken and beef roasting is a popular business here, drawing in hundreds of people particularly at the weekend. It is in this centre that Norah Ebukalim, a farmer, and member of P'KWI farmers association has established their sunflower cooking oil business. The group process their own cooking oil from sunflower that they grow on five acres thanks to the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM). RUFORUM is ensuring students pursuing courses in agricultural related topics reach out to farming communities to sensitise them about agribusiness initiatives especially value addition. Planting. Sunflower grows well in areas with sparse rainfall, and the soil should be slightly acidic with a pH of between 6.0 and 7.5. Several varieties, which include Sunbeam, Mammoth, Autumn Beauty, Teddy Bear and Fedha, are grown in different parts of the country, in particular eastern and northern. They mature in three to four months. One needs at least an acre for a commercial venture, mono-ammonium phosphate or di-ammonium phosphate fertiliser or farmyard manure and certified seeds, which are readily available at agrovets.

To plant, the soil must be tilled to a fine tilth. Narrow furrows are then made and the seeds planted. Alternatively, one can broadcast the seeds and later thin out weak ones. After the initial weeding, the sunflower outgrows the weeds, especially if they are crowded, and further weeding is not required.

For more details, click [here](#)

3. University World News

No PhD, no tenure policy – Is it the best way forward? (Ghana)

The importance of higher education in the development of any nation cannot be overemphasised. It has become a major driver of development for most countries. The role of higher education in Ghana's sustainable social, political and economic development is not contested; its expansion serves the social, political and economic aspirations of Ghana. Hence, successive governments have assumed gatekeeper roles in order to ensure that quality higher education is offered. Central to this goal is the hiring of qualified lecturers to teach at Ghanaian universities. Ghana's key higher education regulatory bodies – the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB) – set the doctoral degree as the minimum qualification for university teaching. However, some circumstances peculiar to Ghana's higher education sector often lead to the relaxation of this policy. There are often shortages of academics with doctoral degrees in some specialised fields, which compel the universities to recruit staff with lower credentials. This practice seems to be common in both public and private universities but the government has vowed to stop this practice. In mid-November 2018 Ghana's minister of education made a public pronouncement to the effect that the government was working to enforce in the near future the implementation of the existing policy that requires a doctoral degree as a prerequisite qualification for university teaching. This seems to have won the support of some higher education stakeholders including the president of the University Teachers' Association of Ghana (UTAG) who claims it is in line with global standards, which Ghana should enforce to be competitive in the global higher education system.

For more details, click [here](#)

4. University World News

Public financial management crisis – What role for universities? (South Africa)

Shortly after the establishment of the new democratic order in 1994, South Africa embarked on a process of public management reform in which public sector financial management was given particular attention. Two important products of this process are the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), enacted in 1999, and the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) enacted in 2003. The PFMA applies to the national and provincial spheres of government, and the MFMA applies to the local sphere. The stated purpose of the PFMA is "to regulate financial management in the national government and provincial governments; to ensure that all revenue, expenditure, assets and liabilities of those governments are managed efficiently and effectively; to provide for the responsibilities of persons entrusted with financial management in those governments..." in order to "secure transparency, accountability, and sound management of the revenue, expenditure, assets and liabilities of the institutions to which it applies". While the MFMA differs considerably from the PFMA in detail, it shares the same broad objectives of promoting effective, efficient, transparent and accountable public sector financial management. Between the

two of them, the PFMA and the MFMA constitute the essential framework for financial management in the public sector. One might have thought that, with the advantage of having (what is by most accounts) a best-practice financial management system underpinned by a comprehensive, sophisticated legislative framework, sound public financial management in South Africa would prevail

For more details, click this [here](#)

5. University World News

Government lifts moratorium on recruitment of academics (Zimbabwe)

Zimbabwe's treasury has reversed its five-year-long freeze on the recruitment of university teaching staff, allowing universities to recruit about 350 lecturers to bolster capacity and improve service delivery in the country's burgeoning higher education sector. The announcement was made last week by Finance and Economic Development Minister Professor Mthuli Ncube, who also extended the recruitment to 3,000 new primary and secondary school teachers to ease teacher shortages. The country has 21 universities – 14 state-owned and seven private universities – all of which face serious challenges that include shortages of qualified teaching staff, particularly lecturers in medical fields. The recruitment of lecturers and teachers effectively lifts a five-year moratorium on staff recruitment, issued by the government in 2013 citing "limited fiscal space". Bindura University of Science Education Vice-Chancellor Professor Eddie Mwenje, who is the current chairman of the Zimbabwe Universities' Vice-Chancellors' Association (ZUVCA), welcomed the development and said the recruitment of the teaching staff would go far in enabling universities to supply the economy with relevant skills. He said because of the freeze, universities were not able to attract staff and pay them. "It is a welcome move. As you know, government has indicated that there are particular areas in our universities where we need to work to provide the skills required by industry.

For more details, click [here](#)

6. University World News

Academics freed as fresh anti-government protests planned (Sudan)

Sudanese authorities on Monday released all University of Khartoum academics arrested and held overnight for their part in ongoing anti-government protests that have claimed the lives of several Sudanese, including at least five students, and shut down higher education institutions. The release of the academics – believed to number at least eight – precedes Wednesday's planned march organised by the Sudanese Professionals' Association (SPA), an umbrella group of independent professional unions, to the National Assembly. On 30 December 2018, academics at Khartoum University issued a statement calling for the "unconditional step down of Sudan's president Omar Al-Bashir, the dissolution of his government and the handover of power to an agreed transitional government formed from all Sudan's walks of life, to help get the country out of this crisis and pave the way for the establishment of free and fair elections to choose who can lead the country". On 5 January, a group of academics from the University of Gezira also issued a statement calling for the release of detainees, respect for human rights, an end to violence against peaceful demonstrators and a decent life for the Sudanese people.

For more details, click [here](#)

7. University World News

Populist' free higher education could cause problems (Mauritius)

While there has been a general public welcome to the New Year's Day announcement by Mauritian Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth that public higher education would be made free, critics have deplored reckless populism, and expressed fears of economic problems and a drop in standards. The prime minister's office told L'Express of Port Louis the reform would cost the state about MUR1 billion (US\$29.5 million), not counting subsidies currently paid to public higher education institutions. There are 10 public higher education institutions, headed by the University of Mauritius (UoM) with 12,500 students, where fees are currently MUR13,000 (US\$380), representing MUR400 million a year, reported L'Express. Full details of the fees abolition were not due to be announced yet, but L'Express reported some academics feared economic catastrophe and lower educational quality. Critics' worries included lack of identification of priority educational sectors and already dilapidated university buildings. Roukaya Kasenally, senior lecturer at UoM, asked: "Where will the money come from? There will be sacrifices in research and infrastructure, and we know universities already have infrastructure problems. Libraries, laboratories, books and even classrooms leave much to be desired and give rise to criticisms."

She added, "It seems that it's only a political populist announcement. Free higher education. It stops at that. There has been no consultation with the different institutions."

For more details, click [here](#)

8. University World News

Public students face extra fees in Côte d'Ivoire (Côte d'Ivoire)

Increasing numbers of students are complaining that private higher education institutions to which they have been assigned are charging excessive fees, in contravention of a government order. With more and more young people qualifying for higher education, public universities have run out of places so private institutions have taken up the surplus, reported *Fraternité Matin* of Abidjan. "Since its independence, Côte d'Ivoire, which has made its ambition to have at its disposal human resources of quality, capable of responding efficiently to the needs of the economy in all domains, has directed all its school-leavers qualified with the baccalauréat to higher education institutions, and taken charge of the costs," Abroh Antoine Assoumou, director of examinations and academic guidance at the ministry of higher education and scientific research, told *Fraternité Matin*. "But given the impossibility of catering for all [those qualified] in public higher education institutions, and the political will not to leave any holder of the baccalauréat without the opportunity to pursue their studies, the state, through the ministry of higher education and scientific research, has granted some of its rights to the private higher education sector, while making sure that it will perform well." But it had been observed that private institutions did not all charge the same fees, in spite of a ministerial order harmonising their charges at XOF85,000 (US\$150) per student which the state would pay, said Assoumou.

For more details, click [here](#)

9. University World News

Makerere prepares for end of 20 years of Swedish support (Uganda)

Makerere University is devising a new sustainability strategy in anticipation of the end of 20 years of Swedish support for research and human resource development at higher education institutions in Uganda. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) has been a primary source of funding for researcher training and research in Uganda under a bilateral research collaboration programme initiated in 2000. The bilateral research programme, aimed primarily at enhancing capacity of public higher education institutions to conduct and sustain strategic and quality research by building a critical mass of independent researchers, has seen the Swedish government invest more than US\$100 million into institutional building, scientific research and human resource development in five public universities: Makerere University, Kyambogo University, Busitema University, Gulu University and Mbarara University of Science and Technology. Professor Buyinza Mukadasi, director of research and graduate training at Makerere University, confirmed the funding will end in 2020. “In an effort to formulate a sound sustainability strategy, Makerere University commissioned a mid-term review from November 2015-February 2018,” he said. The review will evaluate the academic quality and management of local PhD training, the management of cross-cutting courses as well as the programme partnership with Ugandan public universities. According to Mukadasi, there is still no separate budget line for research at Makerere University and attempts to supplement donor and government funding with internally raised funds for research – for example by increasing tuition fees and by regulating and charging a fee on consultancies – have added marginal resources.

For more details, click [here](#)

10. University World News

Dismantling colonisation’s ‘pedagogy of big lies’ (South Africa)

More than two decades after the end of apartheid, historical and structural inequalities, rooted in the racist colonial and apartheid oppression and dispossession, remain part and parcel of the South Africa’s social fabric. The country’s higher education institutions are no exception.

Since 2015, young black students have been demanding fundamental transformation at South African universities. They have campaigned to remove colonial and racist symbols, dismantle oppressive institutional cultures, end epistemic violence and decolonise the curriculum. Decolonisation of the curriculum was supposed to be one of the key priorities after 1994 if higher education were to contribute to fundamental transformation, social cohesion and addressing the difficult past. However, this never happened. The most significant transformation in higher education has been the change in student demographics, with black students and women being the majority of the student body today. However, transformation in academia has lagged behind, with white academics still being in the majority. Another failure has been the lack of curriculum transformation. Curricula at universities remain Eurocentric, rooted in colonial and apartheid knowledge systems and disconnected from the realities and lived experiences of black South Africans. At historically white universities, whiteness – defined by George Sefa Dei as a “system of domination and structure of privilege” – continues to dominate institutional cultures. After 1994, black students and staff were allowed to enter ‘white’ spaces, but they have been expected to conform and not question or disrupt the status quo.

For more details, click [here](#)

11. University World News

[Using digital libraries to overcome information famine \(Somalia\)](#)

With the demise of the central government of Somalia in 1990, its education provision collapsed and its national and only university closed. When Puntland re-emerged as an autonomous state of Somalia in 1998, community-based organisations set up new academic institutions and by 2014, Puntland had nine universities, growing to 14 by 2018. Most are short of teaching and learning resources such as student textbooks, well-stocked libraries for teaching and learning and research, and easy access to digital information. Most universities have internet access, but it is slow, unreliable and expensive. Undersea internet cables have reached the shores of Somalia, but it will still take considerable time for access to reach the inland universities. Student access to the internet and computers is especially poor. As reported by one of the larger universities, “Our campus is large and with a student population of more than 2,000. It is difficult for a student who doesn’t own a laptop to use one of the 40 computers in the computer labs, which are in use all the time. A student is lucky if she can access a computer at least once a week for an hour.” Students of virtually all universities are in a similar situation. To alleviate the problem the ministry of education, supported by the European Union, implemented a project named 'Education is Light'. With additional support from the Minnesota diaspora community, in 2014 they installed an eGranary Digital Library on 10 university campuses. An eGranary consists of over 35 million carefully selected academic documents, comprising over 3,000 websites, stored on a hard disk, which are accessed through a built-in search engine. It can be integrated into a local wired and Wi-Fi network. This 'internet in a box' greatly improves speed and reliability, and reduces the cost of access to digital academic resources such as Wikipedia, academic journals, websites with university courses, videos, textbooks and software.

For more details, click [here](#)

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