

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

### 1. The standard Media

#### **There is a real difference between earning and getting a PhD (General)**

The PhD continues to be a scarce qualification even as the Commission for University Education (CUE) insists that all academics teaching in universities must hold one. The PhD is the highest university qualification that can be conferred by a university. At its core, the PhD process assumes that a candidate has thought through and produced original research that expands the contours of knowledge. In many jurisdictions, individuals who have read and earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree use the title 'doctor' in social and professional settings. Now, I must emphasise that there is a difference between getting a PhD and earning one. Kenya's season of graduations is pretty much the ideal space in exposing this distinction. As its name suggests, 'doctor of philosophy or 'love of wisdom', to earn a doctorate means to be fascinated by, and to love knowledge. An earned doctorate is a product of hours spent on persistent questioning. The only good reason to do a PhD is a driving urge to find the answer to a complex problem and to find out how far you can push yourself in the search for knowledge. The PhD is hard. If it wasn't there would not be a scarcity of the qualifications around. It requires a level of determination and self-discipline that few people possess. As such, for many who get to earn a PhD, there is almost always that season of hibernation, a time where everything is momentarily set aside -- other diversions, family and other interests -- the PhD imposes a peculiar, persistent and noticeable demand on one's intellectual capacities. As such, an earned PhD is preceded by long seasons of absences. In contrast, there appears a trend where individuals are merely getting a PhD -- and not earning one -- without the traditional sacrifices that would ordinarily accompany the effort. 'Getting' a PhD is working one's way to the pinnacle of academia by sheer grit, guile and absolute absence of intellectual sacrifice and investment of time and thought. As opposed to earning a PhD, 'getting' a PhD is a publicity spectacle where the occasion is designed more to make a statement than to speak to the research community.

Read more [here](#)

### 2. University World News

#### **How universities can play a leading role in their cities (South Africa)**

South African higher education policy is generally failing to tackle the issue of how the country's universities can play a leading role in the evolution of the cities in which most of them are based. Even students who have taken to the streets in protest at the miserable, overcrowded conditions in the campus neighbourhoods in which they are forced to live have failed to challenge the elitist concept of universities as detached ivory towers which continues to dominate much higher education policy-making. Despite the arrival of the urban age -- with more people globally now living in towns rather than the countryside -- the cities hosting South African universities are often regarded as little more than the local sites where these institutions happen to be located, as if there were, or should be, no civic engagement between municipality and university. Urban universities are too often seen as being merely in the city, rather than of and working for the city, experts recently told an audience of international and South African policy-makers, practitioners and academics at a workshop convened in Cape Town by the Urban Studies Institute at Georgia State University in the

United States and the South African national research body, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). Such oppositional town-vs-gown rhetoric in South Africa has failed to acknowledge the actual political economy of urban development, in which vested interests continue to produce spatially defined socio-economic inequalities. The approach has further ignored crucial challenges that have arisen from the national government's efforts to massify higher education after the introduction of democracy in 1994 brought an end to apartheid. A key concern underpinning the nationwide #FeesMustFall student protest movement which erupted in 2015 has been the failure to provide poor, black and coloured students at urban universities with the material, social and cultural conditions that enable them to reap the full benefits of more democratic access to higher education and urban life. Taking seriously the task of urbanising the South African university offers the potential to realise a more holistic approach, the audience at the Cape Town workshop was told. Read more [here](#)

### 3. University World News

#### 'Merit-based' approach to leadership disadvantages women (Ethiopia)

The role of Ethiopian higher education leaders has become increasingly complex in areas such as internal university expansion and the relationship with government. Issues related to student catering, accommodation and health are also becoming more and more challenging for higher education leaders and managers. Coping with such challenges and addressing the demands of stakeholders requires self-motivated, experienced and knowledgeable higher education leaders. They need to have a good range of knowledge, perspectives and skills and to be a visionary who can bring other people along with them. In Ethiopia, the Higher Education Proclamation (Proclamation No. 650/2009) states that public higher education institutions have the autonomy to nominate top-level leaders (president, vice presidents and members of the board) and select and appoint mid- and lower-level leaders (directors, deans and heads of departments). However, until recently the university community had no hands-on role in the nomination and appointment of top-level leaders. Most of them do not even know whether there are set criteria and a process to follow for nominating, selecting and appointing top-level leaders. Although some universities have developed guidelines for the selection and appointment of leaders, including vice presidents, implementation has not been consistent, transparent or inclusive. The appointment of higher education leaders in Ethiopia has been problematic because university presidents have been selected for mainly ethnic and location-based reasons. These criteria were not stated or written in any government directives or institutional guidelines but showed that the government's focus was more on leaders with an interest in the government's mission rather than the mission of their universities. This kind of leadership appointment strategy overlooked different academic leadership qualities and also undermined the autonomy of higher education institutions.

Read more [here](#)

#### 4. University World News

##### **Violence against African students undermines Higher Education plans (Tunisia)**

Tunisia continues to witness incidents of criminally or racially motivated violent attacks on Sub-Saharan African students, which threaten the safety of the foreign academic community and undermine Tunisia's plan for becoming an attractive African hub for education and training. Among the incidents making the news more recently was that involving Falikou Coulibaly, the president of the Association of Ivorian students in Tunisia, who was stabbed to death in the capital Tunis, on 23 December last year. Following his murder, the Association of African Students and Trainees in Tunisia issued a statement calling for Sub-Saharan African students living in Tunisia to protest against violence and racial discrimination targeting Sub-Saharan Africans and to denounce what they say is a hate crime, according to media reports. A recent study by the Tunisian Association for the Support of Minorities has shown that over 70% of Sub-Saharan African students are victims of racism at universities or in public life, according to a video report from CGTN Africa during coverage of the association's 2018 international symposium organised by the Free University of Tunis. Over the past few years, there have been periodic attacks on African students in Tunisia. On Christmas Eve in 2016, three Congolese students were stabbed in Tunis. In an important step forward in defending the rights of the 10% to 15% of Tunisians who identify as black, as well as the country's 60,000 Sub-Saharan African immigrants, Tunisia's parliament passed the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination Act on 9 October last year, which defines and criminalises racial discrimination, according to the US think tank, the Brookings Institute

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#### 5. University World News

##### **British Council to boost academics' communication skills (Kenya)**

The British Council in Kenya is offering training in communication and writing skills for scholars and researchers to enable them to publish in international journals and to empower emerging researchers to seize available opportunities for funding. The British Council, under the Researcher Connect training series, is targeting researchers in universities and research institutions in different academic fields, irrespective of the stage or phase in their respective careers. Those targeted include doctoral students, early-career researchers and PhD holders in general, as well as post-doctoral scholars. The training aims to build communication and writing skills, enabling researchers to communicate their findings, and pursue grants and fellowships available locally and internationally. "It focuses on the development of excellent communication skills using the English language in international, multicultural contexts. It is appropriate for upper intermediate level learners and above, and will enable them to communicate their research effectively with a range of audiences in appropriate academic and-or professional styles," said a call made by the British Council on its website. "Researchers need the communication skills to enable them to publish in international journals and present at conferences in English, apply for funding to national and international bodies, communicate with the wider public and policy-makers and build international collaborations to further their research," it added.

Read more [here](#)

## 6. University World News

### **AU initiative to provide training for vulnerable groups (Cameroon)**

A bureau for the Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA), an African Union initiative to provide vocational training and improve employment prospects for young people, women and vulnerable groups, was launched last week at the University of Yaoundé in Cameroon. The Skills Initiative for Africa or Compétences pour l’Afrique is an African Union Commission project supported by the African development partnership NEPAD and the German Development Bank. According to the Cameroon Tribune, Yaoundé University will receive XAF4 billion (US\$6.9 million) to open a training centre and set up a laboratory as a centre of excellence in renewable energies. Cameroon is one of several African countries to benefit from the programme to reduce poverty, unemployment and under-employment. It is aimed at training young people, women and vulnerable groups, and at developing employment and entrepreneurial initiatives for refugees, migrants and the disabled, reported Cameroon Tribune. The Yaoundé bureau was officially launched on 21 January by Minister of Employment and Vocational Training Issa Tchiroma Bakary in the presence of German Ambassador Hans-Dieter Stell and NEPAD representative Fati N'zi-Hassane. Bakary underlined the importance of the project, which he said was dedicated to promoting professional qualifications through supporting practical and entrepreneurial skills in partnership with companies, reported the Cameroon Tribune.

Read more [here](#)

## 7. University World News

### **Economic crisis is forcing HE students to drop out (Zimbabwe)**

Many students in Zimbabwe are facing the prospect of having to forgo their university studies in favour of their siblings’ education as the country’s economic meltdown continues to bite. “I do not hate my brother or sister but lately they serve as a grim reminder that I may not be able to return to school when the 2019 academic year begins in February,” said Nesta Chikwande, a 22-year-old female student at the University of Zimbabwe, who hails from the dormitory town of Chitungwiza. The sociology major’s dreams of being an industrial sociologist are fading fast. “Our parents have been hard hit by the economic situation; my mother is a vendor while my father is a low-ranked civil servant. My siblings are in high school and require at least 2,000 Bond [notes] in fees alone. “Their fees are a priority compared to mine. I am told I can defer, which my brother, who is sitting for the Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC) Advanced Level examinations this year, cannot do,” said Chikwande. The cost of living has spiralled in Zimbabwe over the past decade and the country faces economic collapse. Many companies are shutting down. The decline in earnings of pensioners, peasant farmers and civil servants and others paying tuition fees for their offspring has been eroded by hyperinflation and a currency crisis. A civil servant on the bottom rung pockets a measly 414 Bond, which translates to US\$92 at the prevailing black market rate of 350% for a real-time gross settlement (RTGS) transaction, the channel through which they receive their salaries.

Read more [here](#)

## 8. Daily Monitor

### **Government releases new salary structure for universities (Uganda)**

Government has yielded to pressure from striking lecturers and released the new salary structure for the public universities in the country. The proposed salary structure released by the Ministry of Public Service caters for both teaching and non-teaching staff. In a January 17 circular, the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Public Service, Ms Catherine Bitarakwate, wrote: “The purpose of this letter is to submit to you the revised salary structure for public universities for implementation with immediate effect. You should process the salary arrears that have accrued since 1st July 2018 following the due process.” In the new structure, the salaries of vice chancellors of the public universities have been increased from Shs11.2m to Shs11.8m, deputy vice chancellors will earn Shs10.1m up from Shs9.6m. Professors and associate professors for sciences will earn Shs9.6m from Shs9.1m and Shs9m from Shs8.5m, respectively. Professors and associate professors for non-science courses will, however, earn Shs8.5m and Shs8.2m, up from Shs8.1m and Shs7.7m, respectively. But the non-teaching staff say figures released show “serious variations” in allocating the funds to the different salary scale groups. They say the first release had much higher figures, but the latest release has seen the increments decreasing. The pay structure, a copy which Sunday Monitor has seen indicates that while in the first installment released at the beginning of the financial year the increments were between Shs500,000 and Shs700,000, in the latest release, the rates came down to between Shs300,000 and Shs500,000 for the non-teaching staff. The affected employees are demanding for an explanation before calling off the strike. Mr Jackson Betihamah, the chairperson of the public universities non-teaching staff executive forum (PUNTSEF), reacted with consternation and insisted that the government must explain the discrepancies. “We need an explanation. Has the number of staffing gone up? We know there is a ban on recruitment in public universities so what happened?” Mr Betihamah asked. He also said government is continuing to dilly-dally on the arrears of Shs4.3b it owes to the non-teaching staff, which he said must be paid immediately.

Read more [here](#)

## 9. Ghana Web

### **Rethink decision to allow only PhD holders as university lecturers - Most Rev. Sarpong (Ghana)**

The Archbishop Emeritus of the Kumasi Archdiocese of the Catholic Church, Most Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong, has questioned the Ministry of Education’s decision to employ only PhD holders as lecturers for the country’s universities. He asked the government to rethink the decision as he said it would deprive the institutions of experienced lecturers needed to train the human resource required for the development of the country. Reacting to the ministry’s decision, Most Rev. Sarpong said, “on the face of it, a PhD degree indicates knowledge and experience in at least research and that the person with a PhD is able and capable of teaching in the university.” However, he contended that, that had not always been the case as “there are dozens of PhD holders who are awful teachers.” Besides that, he said there were a few lecturers currently in the country who possessed PhD degrees, adding that there were so many examples both in Ghana and outside, of great lecturers who nurtured and trained the best brains the world had ever had but did not hold PhD degrees themselves. While not disputing the usefulness of the PhD degrees, he cautioned that, “their importance should not be allowed to eclipse the irreplaceability of efficiency, performance,

pedagogical excellence and devotion to duty.” On the retiring age of teachers, the retired archbishop conceded that there was the need to allow the old and aged teachers to go to pave the way for young teachers to be promoted within the Ghana Education Service (GES). “If at the retiring age teachers are still allowed to teach, they will inevitably block the chances of their younger colleagues being promoted,” he said. That notwithstanding, he said, “I want to express the opinion that it is a fact that expertise grows with experience. Ghana is full of examples of how retired teachers, or for that matter, public servants have been employed to keep the quality or whatever area of service they are operating in.” According to him, academic qualification was not an index of scholarship “nor is it an indication of the ability to impart knowledge.”

Read more [here](#)

## 10. University World News

### 'Anchored in Place' – Rethinking the university and development (South Africa)

Notions of 'place' in South Africa are inherently problematic and inextricably bound to the past. The idea and reality of the spaces in which its black, coloured and white populations live are, to a great extent, the socio-economic and cultural products of successive political programmes: the inhumane systems of population control along racialist lines implemented by the country's past colonial and apartheid regimes, and the subsequent flawed efforts to remedy historical injustices enacted by the democratic government led by the African National Congress (ANC). Accordingly, it is perhaps unsurprising that an activist academic engagement drives this eclectic, inter-disciplinary collection of 12 essays – Anchored in Place: Rethinking the university and development in South Africa – analysing the particular challenges that the country's universities have faced as place-based institutions in helping to make and remake their local and regional neighbourhoods both before, but mainly after, the democratic election of 1994. Two of the volume's three co-editors – Nico Cloete and Leslie Bank – have played leading roles in progressive government, civil society and university-sponsored efforts to restructure the country's higher education system and promote urban engagement for tertiary institutions in the Eastern Cape – both of which are key topics for the book. It is therefore to the volume's great credit that, while campaigning for a greater developmental role for universities in South Africa, whether as part of a differentiated higher education system or as catalysts for local, mainly urban growth, and despite high hopes of the benefits that may accrue as a result, it adopts a broadly agnostic view of the likelihood of effective university place-making and the impacts that such may bring.

Read more [here](#)

## 11. Daily Nation

### Leadership row looms as University of Nairobi Council rejects CS Amina's DVCs (Kenya)

A leadership row is once again simmering at the University of Nairobi as the institution's council has rejected the names of three deputy vice-chancellors (DVCs) appointed by Education Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohamed. Ms Mohamed bypassed the names of candidates the council recommended for appointment after they emerged top in interviews conducted between January 7 and 9. The row has now landed at Attorney-General Kihara Kariuki's office for advisory opinion, the council insisting that Ms Mohamed overstepped her mandate. The council chaired by Prof Julia Ojiambo had recommended Prof Isaac Mbeche, who scored 82.9percent for the position of DVC of

finance, planning and development. However, Ms Mohamed appointed Prof Mohamud Jama who emerged second with 66.8percent. Prof Mbeche, who is also students' affairs deputy VC has been the acting DVC of finance, planning and development since 2016 when Prof Bernard Njoroge was kicked out. Prof Mohamud has been the deputy principal of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The council had also recommend the appointment Prof Stephen Kiama, who scored 78.7percent in the interview as DVC human resource and administration but the CS has appointed Prof William Ogara who was third in the interview with 62 percent. It wanted Prof Madara Ogot, who emerged top with 76 percent to take over the as the DVC of research, production and extension but the Cs appointed Prof Lydia Njenga who emerged third with 63.1 percent.

Read more [here](#)

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