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

1. IT News Africa

**South African universities leverage Blackboard Learn in the Cloud** *(South Africa)*

Blackboard has announced that the University of the Free State, the University of Johannesburg and the University of Pretoria are now leveraging the Software as a Service (SaaS) deployment of Blackboard Learn, the company’s flagship Learning Management System (LMS). Thanks to the AWS-powered SaaS deployment, the three universities, which are ranked by QS among the top ten institutions of South Africa, will benefit from several enhancements including zero-downtime updates, continuous delivery of new features and reduction of costs. The institutions also have the option to implement the Ultra experience, the next-generation user interface of Blackboard Learn, or continue to leverage the Original experience their students and teachers are familiar with. This flexibility allows the universities to answer their specific requirements, and to further focus on delivering an unparalleled teaching and learning experience that meets the needs of students and faculty. The University of the Free State (UFS) has been successfully utilizing Blackboard Learn as a self-hosted solution for some years. Recently, the IT department and the Center of Teaching and Learning (CTL) decided to take a new approach to the management, maintenance and support of the LMS. The transition to the SaaS deployment perfectly answered the different needs, with the IT team becoming more service oriented and the CTL directly managing the LMS. Thanks to the flexibility of the SaaS delivery model, UFS continued to use the Original experience for the Bloemfontein, QwaQwa and South (undergraduate programs) Campuses and fully implemented the Ultra experience in the delivery of fully online and distance programs on the South Campus. “The SaaS deployment of Blackboard Learn provides UFS staff and students with a technological environment that enables teaching and learning, which is crucial to student success and engagement,” said Tiana van der Merwe, Deputy Director for the Centre for Teaching and Learning at UFS. “As one of the oldest universities in South Africa, we believe that keeping abreast of technological advancements is what an institution of higher learning must be doing.

Read more [here](#).

2. Daily Monitor

**Scientists to breed grasshoppers all year-round** *(Uganda)*

November is well known as the month for grasshoppers, popularly known as nsenene, in central and south-western Uganda. However, the wait for November will soon be no more as scientists will now breed the grasshoppers throughout the year. The project is expected to supplement diets and reduce protein, energy and micronutrient deficiency among people. The project is led by Dr Dorothy Nakimbugwe of Makerere University and is being carried out by scientists from the East African Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO). “The nsenene comes once in a year in the month of November but our teams have come up with new innovations of growing it all year round so that we don’t wait for that one month. We should be eating the complement ones as we wait for the Masaka ones,” Mr Julius Ecuru, the programme manager of BioInnovate Africa, revealed on Saturday during a two-day workshop in Kampala. When asked when the first locally reared nsenene will be available, Mr Ecuru said by 2020/21.
Mr Ecuru further said they have injected about $15m into supporting East African scientists for the next four to five years to help them transfer their ideas into practice. According to the website of BioInnovate Africa (See Link), the need to rear nsenene throughout the year was due to the high demand exerted on the animal proteins which are not enough. “It’s estimated that 827 million people in developing regions, most of them in Africa, suffer undernourishment and the situation is expected to worsen, unless efforts are made to reverse food and nutrition insecurity.

Read more here

3. KTPRESS

Rwanda Takes over Management of Carnegie Mellon University Africa (Rwanda)

Rwanda Development Board (RDB) has officially handed over custodianship of Carnegie Mellon University-Africa (CMU-Africa) to the Ministry of education with plans to have at least half of the graduate students coming from Rwanda. The handover was done this Friday March 1, 2019 between RDB CEO, Claire Akamanzi and the Education Minister Dr. Eugene Mutimura, meaning that the latter will now oversee quality assurance and education policy implementation. With Rwanda being the custodian of the CMU-Africa- which is a center of excellence for the Africa hub, the ministry of education said that more Rwandans will be enrolled in the highly competitive university. “As per the agreement we intend to have half or more than half of the students at CMU coming from Rwanda to cut on sending students abroad for the same training that is equally available here,” said Dr. Mutimura. Since establishing its Africa operation in 2011 with Rwanda as center of excellence and signing memorandum with Rwanda government, CMU has released five graduate classes of 145 master’s students. Out of these Rwanda has managed to graduate 104 (80%) students. In the current intake, Rwandan students represent 50% according to Crystal Rugege, the CMU Director of Strategy. As it is the case at CMU Pittsburg, the Masters programe at CMU Africa takes two years. The university considers students excellence, innovation, and the societal relevance of its pursuits and only has a 7% intake out of hundreds of applications. Despite Rwandan students being competent and eligible, they have faced a challenge of the English language competence examination- known as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), according to Akamanzi.

Read more here

4. University World News

Student loan scheme seeks fresh funds in new plan (Kenya)

The Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), the agency that disburses loans to students on behalf of the Kenyan government, launched a five-year strategic plan recently aimed at increasing loan allocations, easing the loan application process, improving the loan allocation criteria to capture the neediest cases and ensuring timely disbursements. HELB plans to review interest on loans to the Central Bank of Kenya base lending rate +1 within four years. The loans currently attract an interest rate of 4% while the cost of funds is about 8%, which means that in the long run the fund is shrinking without a matching government capitation. This will make the loans more expensive for students, placing a bigger repayment burden on them after graduation and exposing HELB to a higher credit risk. Loan defaults have been one of the biggest challenges for the agency, which has nearly crippled its lending capacity at a time when there are more students seeking loans than ever
before. Due to the high level of unemployment and migration of beneficiaries to the diaspora seeking greener pastures, the number of defaulting borrowers has continued to increase and currently stands at 61,700 beneficiaries holding a total of KES6.5 billion (US$65 million). This is a default rate of over 30%, nearly thrice Kenya’s financial sector percentage of non-performing loans which stands at around 12%. “The board will step up efforts to recover the loans from the defaulters by increasingly engaging beneficiaries who have migrated to the diaspora, tracing and bringing into the repaying brackets borrowers working in the informal sector, engaging strategic partners for support in recoveries and compliance,” said HELB Chief Executive Officer Charles Ringera. HELB plans to annually increase the student loan allocation by 5%. It will also raise the number of beneficiaries covered under the scheme from the current 282,113 students to 394,789 in the next five years. To achieve this, HELB hopes to increase the available lending portfolio by 100%, to KES2.6 billion from the current KES1.2 billion. Effectively, the minimum loan allocation per student will increase from KES36,780 to KES46,721, while the maximum will be raised from KES59,644 to KES75,549.

5. University World News

The promise of engaging the academic diaspora (Ethiopia)

Despite the absence of precise data, there is a general consensus that Ethiopia has a massive intellectual resource in its diaspora. In the United States, for instance, where 32% of those aged 25 or older have at least a bachelor degree, the Ethiopian diaspora is estimated to have educational qualifications that exceed the national average. Moreover, in 2012 the United Nations reported that according to a conservative estimate, there were about 1,600 individuals of Ethiopian origin in the US and Canada alone who have a PhD; and there is ample reason to expect that this number has considerably increased since. Although the numbers in other popular destinations for the Ethiopian diaspora such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway and Australia may not be as large as for the US and Canada, it is likely they have a similar educational profile. Nonetheless, the contribution of the Ethiopian diaspora to areas of knowledge and higher education in Ethiopia has not met expectations or fulfilled its potential. In the past, two main factors are likely to have been responsible for this. On the one hand, the bitter political relationship between the Ethiopian government and most members of the diaspora has prevented any engagement with Ethiopian higher education institutions or any public institutions for that matter. On the other hand, the absence of a well-articulated diaspora engagement strategy that emphasises knowledge and technology has made the engagement of those who overcame hostile relations informal and fragmented.

Read more here
6. Egypt Independent

**Global higher education forum to be held in Egypt’s New Administrative Capital (Egypt)**

The Higher Education Ministry has chosen the New Administrative Capital as headquarters of the Global Forum for Higher Education and Scientific Research, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Khaled Abdel Ghaffar announced. During a press conference on Sunday, Abdel Ghaffar said that the forum will be held under the title “Higher Education and Scientific Research between the Present and the Future” from April 4 to 6. The forum aims to addressing the present and future of higher education and scientific research and technology by discussing a number of issues put forward globally. The Minister explained that the forum would address a number of important topics, including maximizing the return on investment in higher education and scientific research, and directing scientific research to serve the goals of sustainable development and economy. Abdel Ghaffar pointed out that the forum will discuss how to benefit from technology in achieving quality within educational and research institutions and in modern disciplines such as artificial intelligence and the internet, by developing the skills of graduates to keep pace with the demands of local, regional and international labor markets. The forum also focuses on curriculum development to meet the requirements of development and enhance the abilities and skills of students and faculty members in the field of scientific research and innovation. A number of important issues will be discussed as well, including the internationalization of higher education and intercultural dialogue, dissemination of entrepreneurship and education opportunities, as well as the importance of global educational classifications and the different criteria used in these classifications. The Minister added the forum also aims at exchanging international experience in the fields of education, scientific research and innovation, and pointed out that this comes in line with the global changes and the fourth industrial revolution. He added that hosting the forum shows Egypt’s concern for the future of higher education and scientific research, with the announcement of 2019 as the year of education coming in conjunction with Egypt’s presidency of the African Union. A large exhibition will be held on the sidelines of the forum with the participation of private, civil, and foreign universities, and research institutions, aiming to provide an opportunity for students in the pre-university stage to learn about the available higher education opportunities.

Read more [here](#).