

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

### 1. University World News

#### Applied universities – A viable path to higher education (Ethiopia)

The idea of the applied university is growing as an enticing concept in developed and developing countries alike, offering a vehicle for system differentiation and the production of high-level practical skills. The applied university goes by many names – polytechnic university, university of applied sciences, vocational university, applied technological university – according to what countries think best describes their context. For example, the German term *fachhochschule*, the French *haute école*, the Dutch *hogeschool*, and the Italian *scuola universitaria professionale* all hint at the different emphases given by the institutions to functions such as teaching, research and professional qualifications. However, in spite of these variations, the applied university distinguishes itself from traditional universities in its focus on practical knowledge. Enhanced opportunities for the development of high-level practical skills that these institutions represent are especially appealing to countries and systems that seek a highly trained workforce that can contribute to national economic growth and development. The fact that applied universities are increasingly assuming similar status and prestige as traditional universities further augments their appeal. The availability of applied universities within a given system also helps in the process of differentiation of a higher education system, providing more choices to students who seek a study path based closely upon their interests and career plan. Ethiopia has a long history of school-based technical and vocational education. The first technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institution was founded in 1942 as *Ecole National des Artes Technique*, later known as Addis Ababa Technical School. Other middle-level schools with vocational orientation operated across the country with particular focus in areas such as agriculture, technology and business. In the early 1960s Ethiopian high schools were structured along two streams: one purely academic and the other focusing on vocational training. In 1963 the Bahir Dar Polytechnic Institute was set up as a higher education institution with vocational orientation. The national education sector review initiated in 1973 viewed TVET as one major solution to the perennial problems of the theory-oriented education system that offered neither practical skills nor employment opportunities for the thousands of school-leavers. However, despite this solid start, the next two decades were characterised by the mushrooming of academic-oriented institutions across all levels of education and the gradual dominance of an academic orientation in the higher education sector. Today, the country has 50 universities and more than 160 private higher education institutions which together accommodate nearly a million students.

Read more [here](#)

### 2. Daily Monitor

#### Makerere's good week shows it can still build for the future (Uganda)

Makerere University's potential remains huge. Despite the rather frequent staff and student strikes, and the general malaise that troubles the place, Makerere every so often dusts itself up and unleashes its latent intellectual power. The university just picked up close to Shs5 billion to monitor air quality in Kampala. It was a competitive process and Makerere was one of 20 organisations from around the world, and the only one from Africa, to emerge tops in the Google Artificial Intelligence Impact Challenge. Some 2,602 applications came in from organisations in 119 countries.

Essentially, Google.org sought ideas for projects that can use artificial intelligence or AI (“ability of a computer to act like a human being”) to address societal challenges. The successful applications, among others, had to present ideas for projects with “potential for impact, scalability, feasibility and the responsible use of AI”. The Makerere idea is described by Google.org thus: “Air pollution is a major contributor to poor health and mortality in developing countries. Tracking spatial and temporal pollution patterns is essential to combating it, but can be difficult in low-resource environments. Researchers from Makerere University will apply AI to data from low-cost air sensors installed on motorcycle taxis and the responsible use of AI”. The Makerere idea is described by Google.org thus: “Air pollution is a major contributor to poor health and mortality in developing countries. Tracking spatial and temporal pollution patterns is essential to combating it, but can be difficult in low-resource environments. Researchers from Makerere University will apply AI to data from low-cost air sensors installed on motorcycle taxis and other locations around Kampala to help improve air quality monitoring and forecasting and inform future interventions.” On top of the pile of cash, the researchers behind the idea from Makerere’s College of Computing and Information Sciences will, among others, also receive coaching from Google’s AI experts, and participate in a customised six-month Google Developers Launchpad Accelerator programme to jumpstart their work. I see a regional, even continental, centre of excellence on all things computing emerging around the College of Computing at Makerere. Someone needs to nurture it. If you want to know how thus far the College of Computing became “a place with an impressive number of skilled researchers who have created and sustained a vibrant and robust computer science base”, google up a 2018 paper titled, The Rise of Computing Research in East Africa: The Relationship Between Funding, Capacity and Research Community in a Nascent Field (Full disclosure: one of the five authors, G. Pascal Zachary, is a friend). If I were to set a new challenge for the good geeks, it would be to use AI to reduce accidents on Uganda’s highways. So far it seems the researchers are focused on urban areas with their “robust traffic flow monitoring” work.

Read more [here](#)

### 3. University World News

#### **Government in reform mode, puts brakes on new universities (Kenya)**

The Kenyan government has barred the establishment of new public universities and satellite campuses as part of a raft of reforms aimed at rebuilding robust institutions of higher education and improving quality in the sector. Speaking at a workshop organised by the ministry of education in collaboration with the World Bank on 6 May, Education Cabinet Secretary Professor George Magoha said there is a need to strengthen existing institutions by ensuring they are well equipped and have the capacity, including faculty, to deliver quality education. A former vice-chancellor himself, Magoha said the number of fully-fledged universities in Kenya had risen from 18 in 2009 to 49 today. A total of 25 others were awaiting charters. Since his appointment in March this year, he said he had received over 30 requests to open up new public universities. “This quantitative expansion seems to have occurred at the expense of quality,” said Magoha. The workshop was attended by vice-chancellors, lecturers, officials from the Commission for University Education, the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service and Kenya National Qualifications Authority. However, Magoha said he was disappointed by the poor turnout of vice-chancellors. Out of 78 invited, only 20 attended, he said.

Among the other measures the government is considering under the reform agenda are right-sizing and downsizing of staff to ensure proper staffing norms and the rationalisation of academic programmes and institutions, with a view to realising the full potential of the existing universities and campuses. This could see programmes and even universities and campuses being consolidated to maximise existing resources. To this end Magoha has directed the Commission for University Education to conduct a survey of all universities. The probe will look at qualifications of teaching staff, facilities, student to lecturer ratios and supervision capacity for postgraduate students. The commission has also been directed to review PhD programmes. The report is expected to be presented to the cabinet secretary by 31 July. “I expect to see a proposal on how we rationalise the existing universities so that we can have universities that are of high quality, providing the necessary student support for learning, [that] are involved in relevant research, and are globally competitive,” said Professor Magoha. As such, universities will only specialise in academic programmes in which they are relatively strong, while strengthening academic programmes that contribute to the national and global development agenda. Duplication of programmes means universities are receiving funds from government to do the same thing, he said. He asked universities to focus and specialise in different fields to offer solutions to the challenges facing humanity. He cited climate change and water scarcity as issues that require more attention.

Read more [here](#)

#### 4. Inside Higher Ed

##### **Why Every University Needs an Africa Strategy (Global)**

American universities are largely unprepared for a key global phenomenon: Africa’s growing importance. The continent’s prominent demographic, economic and political trends are impossible to overlook, and any institution aspiring to sustain a global brand and position its students to thrive in international settings will need a deliberate Africa strategy. There is no denying Africa’s growing presence in global markets and international affairs. The region’s current population of 1.2 billion is expected to double by 2050, at which point one in every four people will be African. A parallel economic shift will see Africa’s consumer and business spending reach \$6.7 trillion by 2030. Meanwhile, sectors like technology are taking off, with well over 400 active tech hubs across the continent. And on the political stage, Africa is increasingly wielding regional diplomatic power in international fora, such as the United Nations, and influencing global decisions on issues like terrorism, climate change and nuclear nonproliferation. In light of these major trends, here are three reasons why an Africa strategy ought to be a key component of every university’s long-term growth plan. First, increasing students’ exposure to Africa will boost the value proposition of the education that institutions are offering. How can any business student not be exposed to a region that will be home to a quarter of the world’s work force by 2050? How can any student of international affairs not study a continent that makes up a quarter of United Nations member states? Many other subjects -- from technological innovations to energy to environmental sustainability -- would also be incomplete without an in-depth exploration of Africa’s role in these topics. Second, academic institutions in the United States stand to gain by attracting top African candidates -- who are bound to become future leaders in the region and elsewhere -- and by partnering with African universities. Young Africans are hungry for a high-quality education, not least because the region has substantial unmet need for educational opportunities. Africa will be home to 40 percent (or one billion) of the

world's children by 2055, and yet there are currently just about 740 universities across Africa's 10 most populated countries. (By comparison, the United States has around 5,300 colleges and universities.) Any recruitment strategy that did not seek to attract more students from this fast-growing region, which also boasts a rapidly expanding middle class, would be incomplete at best.

At the same time, African universities are keen to collaborate with their American counterparts, which can provide distinct field experience and research opportunities for faculty members across a range of disciplines, including global health and sustainable development. Third, the window for engaging with African countries will not last forever. While American universities present an attractive proposition, they are hardly the only ones vying for the interest of African students and institutions. Foremost in this respect is China, which combines high-level political support and financial aid to attract over 60,000 African students -- surpassing both the United States and the United Kingdom. In turn, such education-based initiatives are helping to pave the way for greater Chinese influence in African countries. Just as many academic institutions now regret their slow start in China, so will they come to regret missing out on early opportunities in Africa.

Read more [here](#)

## 5. Ghana Web

### [Why students are not supervised, invigilated during exams on Ashesi University campus \(Ghana\)](#)

In a normal Ghanaian examination setting, invigilators are provided to prevent students from cheating or engage in any form of examination malpractices. Often times, an exam hall can have about 5 or more invigilators patrolling and guarding the students to ensure that they do not talk or exchange information. But in the case of Ashesi University, authorities do not believe in providing any form of supervision or guidance to students during examinations. According to them, students have pledged to "hold themselves to account during exams not to cheat or tolerate those who do."

As one of the top ten best universities in Ghana, the school in a Facebook post said it encourages students to take responsibility for their own ethical posture, and learn to do the right thing even when no one is watching. The school's mission is to educate ethical, entrepreneurial leaders in Africa; to cultivate within students, the critical thinking skills, the concern for others, and the courage it will take to transform the continent. In a post on Facebook, they stated "Under the Ashesi Honour Code, exams on campus have no invigilators or supervisors. Students pledge to hold themselves to account during exams; to not cheat or tolerate those who do. The Honour Code encourages students to take responsibility for their own ethical posture, and learn to do the right thing even when no one is watching; to be as intentional about developing their character, as they are about developing their skills." Ashesi is recognised as one of the finest universities in Africa, with an educational experience proven to successfully prepare students for rewarding lives and careers.

Read more [here](#)

## 6. University World News

### [Top university mulls expansion of admission examinations \(Uganda\)](#)

Undergraduate admission into Uganda's universities may take a new turn as several academic units at the country's oldest university, Makerere University, mull the introduction of pre-entry examinations aimed at assessing students' suitability for their course. However, some experts argue this is a sign of a weakening university system with broad quality problems.

The College of Health Sciences and School of Engineering as well as the Bachelor of Journalism and Communication programme at Makerere University are among those considering the introduction of the pre-entry examinations. This follows the introduction six years ago of pre-entry examinations by the university's School of Law – a move which sets a precedent for those colleges wishing to emulate the practice. Dr Vincent Ssembatya, director of quality assurance at Makerere University, confirmed that the health sciences and engineering faculties have submitted a request to start pre-entry exams for undergraduate entry. He said such a process can typically take up to two years.

Professor William Tayeebwa, senior lecturer and head of the department of journalism and communication at Makerere University, also confirmed that his department is “considering” the introduction of the pre-entry examination. “We are watching what is happening there [in the other interested faculties] and then we start,” he said. Pre-entry examinations in the School of Law currently cost UGX80,000 (US\$21) and cover areas such as reading and comprehension skills, language skills, numerical skills and logic, general knowledge and analytical writing skills. Ssembatya said pre-entry exams have assisted the university in dealing with certain problems such as matching student numbers with available facilities. Last month, out of 2,080 candidates who sat the pre-entry exams only 447 students, or 22%, passed. The School of Law currently offers only 60 places. “This [the exam] will not fix everything but it will add to the eligibility selection process for students,” Ssembatya told University World News. He said it would be better if all Ugandan universities adopted a uniform approach to the issue of pre-entry examinations: “It would have been best if the whole country moved together.” However, not all universities attract sufficient numbers of students and cannot afford to be so choosy about whom they accept. According to an education expert, it is not just about achieving manageable numbers of students: some students choose to attend some universities because of institutional reputation. “The whole higher education system is wrong. Pre-entry exams simply show a weakening university system,” the expert said, arguing that universities should be able to trust the examinations set and marked by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), which examines final-year high school pupils. Professor Paul Waako, the newly-appointed vice-chancellor of Busitema University, which is watching the process with interest, said universities are merely trying to respond to societal demands around graduate fitness-for-purpose. “Many people feel that students have joined professions for which they are not suited or in which they lack interest. The pre-entry examination is an attempt to address this challenge,” he said. Waako said pre-entry examinations provide a common scale for ranking of multidisciplinary applicants, but they do come with challenges. “There is a challenge that the competencies being sought have not been adequately articulated and the centres where the examinations are conducted are centralised, which raises the issue of accessibility,” he said.

Read more [here](#)

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