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

1. **University World News**

Digital skills demand – A big opportunity for universities (Africa)

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) has urged universities and higher technical education institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa to improve their digital skills training programmes to cater for its prediction that over 230 million jobs in the region will need digital skills by 2030. The study, Digital Skills in Sub-Saharan Africa: Spotlight on Ghana, was produced in cooperation with global strategy firm LEK Consulting. According to Sergio Pimenta, IFC vice president for the Middle East and Africa, the already unmet demand presents public tertiary institutions and private higher education operators with a US$130 billion opportunity to train the future workforce in digital skills in Sub-Saharan Africa. The report states that a global digital revolution is underway and is not likely to bypass Africa. In Ghana, for example, over 9 million jobs will require digital skills by 2030, effectively translating to about 20 million training openings that will need over US$4 billion in training revenue potential. "The digital skills sector is ripe for rapid expansion and investment," said Pimenta. According to the IFC, universities need to urgently make digital education curriculum shifts with an understanding that 50% of subject knowledge acquired during the first year of a four-year technical degree will be outdated by the time a student graduates. "What students need is an adaptive set of skills that will ensure digital readiness," said Dionisis Kolokotsas, the head of inclusive and sustainable development at Google. The study calls for short courses, typically three to 12 months, with a mix of instructional methods geared toward practical learning rather than theoretical understanding. The focus of digital skills should be on graduate employability and market demand. The study finds that although digital skills are perceived to be among the top seven skills needed by the future global workforce – which are critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, leadership, collaboration, computer literacy and application of technology – these skills are undersupplied globally and most particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Highlighting Ghana's digital skills labour market, the study says between now and 2030, the country will have business-to-consumer opportunities for about 700,000 people. The study extrapolates that during the same timeframe Ghana could have business-to-business and business-to-government opportunities that could reach about 18 million people who would require digital skills, and nearly US$3.5 billion in revenue. That makes the situation more urgent, taking into account the fact that employers anticipate more than 40% of skills required for the workforce will change before 2022. "At least 50% of employees in the sector will need to learn different or more advanced digital skills," the report notes.

Read more [here](#)

2. **University World News**

University boards – Visibility, efficiency and accountability (Ethiopia)

University boards serve as key agents of higher education governance in many countries, including Ethiopia, and are frequently conceived of as a buffer between the state and higher education institutions. The largest role in external governance of the higher education sector in Ethiopia is taken by the Ministry of Education, now the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The various strategic roles and functions of the ministry outlined in the Higher Education Proclamation (HEP 2009) ensure the implementation of national policy and strategy on higher education, the

determination and issuance of standards, approval and implementation of the strategic plans of public institutions, and the facilitation of coordination among universities and other external entities.The internal governance of universities, on the other hand, is entrusted to governing and advisory bodies, academic units, administrative and technical support units, and other relevant offices (HEP 2009). In Ethiopia university boards have served as a key component of higher education governance for decades and appear to be situated somewhere between the ministry and the internal governance structures of the university. The university board is currently designated "the supreme governing body of the institution" with a plethora of responsibilities extending from monitoring to supervising the overall operations of the university (HEP 2009). Despite their importance in the achievement of effective and transparent university governance, boards seem to be the least reformed, researched and accountable of all university structures. Strikingly, boards set up during the last six decades under three different governments bear close resemblance to each other, both in terms of numbers of members and composition. When the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA), the first institution of higher learning in the country, was established in 1950 the board of governors consisted of six members appointed by the emperor and the UCAA president.
Read more here

3. University World News

Plotting policy pathways across landscapes of the past (South Africa)

With some scientists claiming that we have only 12 years to save the planet, the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) may have chosen an opportune time-frame for its evaluation of scholarly publishing, the keystone system used by scientists to communicate and verify truth claims. Reflecting on the past dozen years, the academy's recently published 'landmark' report*, Twelve Years Later: Second ASSAf report on research publishing in and from South Africa, sets out to provide substance for informed debate on the state of scholarly publishing in South Africa and, hopefully, for policy consistent with the emergent evidence. Whether the report delivers on this undertaking is the motivation behind this short article. The report comprises eight chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 provide summaries of previous ASSAf reports published in 2006 and 2009 respectively. Chapter 5, a bibliometric analysis of scholarly publishing in South Africa, provides the most recent account (2005 to 2014). All the reports' 16 tables and 32 figures appear in this chapter with its two-paragraph conclusion. Here the report showcases how the vast store of bibliometric data can be put to use to provide empirical evidence on the actual contours of the scholarly publishing landscape in South Africa. Sandwiched in-between are Chapters 3 and 4: one chapter reviews the academy's Scholarly Publishing Programme and its activities over the past 12 years, and the other presents the problems of access for South African researchers seeking to publish in international journals. Chapter 6 draws attention to emerging sources of misconduct and questionable behaviour in scholarly publishing, while Chapter 7 discusses new publishing models and issues related to the quality of scholarly publishing. The final chapter concludes with eight recommendations to improve and protect scholarly research publishing in and from South Africa.
Read more here

4. University World News

Plan to tie student numbers to available facilities, staff (Uganda)

In an attempt to improve quality at universities and institutions of higher learning, the Uganda National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) is to embark upon a stringent exercise to align new student numbers at institutions with available facilities and lecturers. Saul Waigolo, spokesperson for the NCHE, revealed the council's plans during the Ninth East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Network forum which ended on Thursday in Entebbe. The four-day forum was attended by educationists from the six East African Community member states: Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda and South Sudan. "A number of universities are admitting students for the sake of making money, not teaching and skilling learners," said Waigolo. "It is the reason many of our graduates are struggling to find jobs because they don't have the practical hands-on skills. We shall stop this," he said. Uganda has 52 universities, private and public, and eight other degree-awarding institutions as well as over 200 tertiary institutions. Over the years, enrolment has increased to about 250,000 students in tertiary education. However, the quality of graduates is wanting. The move, which will affect both private and government universities as well as technical and vocational institutions licensed and accredited by the council, is aimed at encouraging the teaching of practical and hands-on skills at institutions of higher learning, ultimately raising quality in Uganda and the region. The new plan will mean that an institution with only one lecturer in its journalism department, for instance, will not be allowed to admit more than 40 students to its journalism programme. Professor Alexandre Lyambabaje, executive secretary of the Inter-University Council of East Africa, said universities in the region have bloated numbers and limited equipment compared with technical institutions that have fewer students. "From 1960 to the 1990s, universities passed out better graduates because few students qualified to join them. The liberalisation of education has made it easy for students seeking degrees to access universities. But we can't forget quality," said Lyambabaje at the meeting. In terms of the new scheme, universities and HE institutions in Uganda will have to provide details of facilities and staffing when applying for renewal of their teaching licence. A team from the NCHE will then inspect the institutions, verify the details, and allocate a number the institutions can admit. Waigolo said the council will be particularly strict on institutions offering information and computer technology programmes and related sciences, as well as engineering, accounting, journalism and medicine. "The emphasis is on facilities, lecturers, laboratories and libraries. Institutions will be allowed to admit as many students as they want if they have matching facilities and resources," said Waigolo. A number of educationists welcomed the move. Benard Akol Otemor, curriculum specialist for business, technical, vocational education and training, said matching admissions to facilities will restrict universities to admitting only those students they can adequately teach.

Read more here

5. University World News

Innovation for the public good in a deeply unequal society (South Africa)

Like universities all over the world, South African universities are grappling with the implications of living in the era of the fourth industrial revolution, where there is a blurring of boundaries between the physical, digital and biological domains. They are asking themselves what the accelerating combination of machine automation, the changing nature of work and the ubiquitous digital

mediation of daily life means for the core function of a university, ie that of knowledge production and dissemination. At the same time, South African universities are also asking what these profound social and technological changes mean for their role in a deeply unequal society and whether they will hinder or enhance the democratisation of knowledge creation and access. The challenges posed by the fourth industrial revolution are closely linked to other challenges facing universities in general, especially the persistent state of underfunding of public universities and the rapid marketisation of the sector in most places in the world. It has been convincingly argued during this era that capitalism itself has been restructured into a new form, platform capitalism, whereby the big digital platforms (Google, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Facebook) are reshaping the nature of the economy. Higher education scholars are warning that this in turn is leading to the emergence of the 'platform university', underpinned by a data-driven business model designed to extract profits from higher education and its market opportunities. It is in this situation that public universities everywhere must ask themselves how they can continue to fulfil their missions of civic responsibility and inclusivity for democratic ends. In the light of the country's history, South African universities also ask how they can contribute to redressing the wrongs of the past to address the stark social and economic divisions resulting from hard-to-shift structural inequalities in the country. Unlike many other public universities elsewhere in the world, South African universities are especially aware of this imperative and express an overt commitment to a social justice agenda. They are less entangled in marketised discourses than higher education sectors elsewhere (like England and the United States) and are in a stronger position to confront the new digital era with the will to leverage the emerging models and digital affordances for the public good. This requires a concentrated focus of building on their core strengths, including research, policy engagement, innovation, curriculum review, professional development and enabling students with appropriate graduate attributes. Encouragingly, there is already evidence of original initiatives that are framing and exploring elements of the fourth industrial revolution or 4IR with a public good agenda.

Read more [here]

6. University World News

Mechanism to accredit academic journals in the pipeline (Kenya)

Kenya's Commission for University Education (CUE) has proposed the establishment of a mechanism for accrediting academic journals, with a view to encouraging more publications by Kenyan scholars in high-quality academic journals. According to CUE, Kenya's contribution to scholarly journals is low compared with Egypt and South Africa, and academics lack clear guidance on where to publish. Like other academics in Africa, they also fall victim to so-called predatory journals: commercial publications whose only motivation is to make a profit and which pay little attention to quality. Under the Universities Act 2012 the commission has a mandate to accredit university journals, and to promote quality research and innovation in universities licensed to operate in Kenya. According to Professor Jackson Too, head of CUE research and development, local scholars lack the motivation to publish in high impact journals. He said certifying publications in which academics could publish would help promote a "quality assurance culture". In countries where a mechanism for approving acceptable publications is in place, more scholarly work was produced, resulting in better public policies and decision-making, he told a stakeholders' meeting hosted by the commission on 26 March to deliberate on the proposal. The push for a national tool for approving publications was not

meant to infringe academic freedom, but intended to enhance research innovation output emanating from the Kenyan academia, he said. It was agreed at the workshop that a number of steps needed be taken to actualise the plan, among them the formation of professional bodies of scholars to run journals, based on their various disciplines. Additionally there was a need to enhance efforts to stop plagiarism by, inter alia, making use of plagiarism detection software. There was also a need to 'internationalise' journals by hosting them on highly visible online platforms and attracting publications by international scholars. According to Professor Mike Kuria, a deputy director at the Inter-University Council for East Africa, the accreditation plan would have the effect of encouraging publication in professionally-run, high-quality journals, while helping scholars avoid predatory publications that earned them no recognition. "Accreditation of publications is a good thing. It means that when a scholar publishes in an accredited journal, authorities recognise their work. And we know that promotions are earned through activities such as publishing," Kuria told University World News. He said it would also shield academics from being taken advantage of by commercial publications and help upcoming scholars from "publishing for the sake of publishing", and from doing so in journals that did not "advance scholarship". He said an official "live list" of international and locally-approved publications had proved to be successful in countries such as South Africa. Read more here

7. University World News

eLearning Africa – Making the most of the continent's talent (Africa)

With the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and increased exposure to global markets and technological innovation, the continent's prospects for growth and development are promising. Against this backdrop, this year's eLearning Africa conference looks, among other focus areas, at how the continent can best help its young people to turn their talents into skills and skills into success. eLearning Africa is the key networking event for ICT-supported education, training and skills development in Africa and brings together high-level policy-makers, decision-makers and practitioners from education, business and government. Rebecca Stromeyer, the founder and organiser of eLearning Africa, said this year's pan-African gathering will be "very practical". "We will be looking at how we can make the most of African talent and how we can turn African skills into success. We had a successful call for papers, which resulted in some very interesting proposals "Some of the world's leading experts will be participating in the conference, along with investors, entrepreneurs and political leaders, so it will be a great opportunity to discuss the role of education, training and technology in equipping Africans with the skills they need to succeed in the future."

A ministerial round table will be held on the opening day of the conference. It will be attended by education, technology and communication ministers from all over Africa. Their discussions will focus on the importance of learning, training, skills and investment to helping Africans to make the most of plans for an African Common Free Trade Area.

Albert Nsengiyumva, executive secretary of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa said ensuring people have the skills they need to compete is vital for the future of the continent. "The pace of change is going to get faster and faster. If we want to make a reality of the African Union's 2063 vision of a 'transformed continent', we have got to put the systems, structures and solutions we need in place now," he said. "We also need to look carefully at what investors expect from Africa's workforce and how we can make African labour markets attractive to potential

employers. The discussions ministers and investors have at this year's eLearning Africa are an important part of planning for the future," he added. As usual eLearning Africa will be accompanied by an international exhibition of products, services, solutions and courses. "The exhibition is a good sign of the interest outside investors are taking in Africa," said Stromeyer. "I have seen the exhibition grow and this year there is no doubt there is real excitement about opportunities in Africa's edtech sector. It is a rapidly growing market, which could soon be the biggest in the world, and some of the best known names in global education and technology will be taking part." Now in its 14th year, the annual eLearning Africa conference, which has earned a reputation as the continent's leading edtech conference and exhibition, takes place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 23-25 October.
Read more here

8. University World News

Academy launched to train country's future leaders (Congo)

An academy to train future leaders and decision-makers and prepare them for the socio-economic development of the Republic of the Congo has been set up in Brazzaville. The Fondation Perspectives d'Avenir (FPA) has opened the Académie du Leadership et de l'Employabilité, which will be organised around four 'pillars', emphasising development of collective intelligence, leadership, entrepreneurship and innovation, as well as civicism, ethics, human rights and democratic governance, reported the Féderation Atlantique des Agences de Presse Africaines (FAAPA). The first stage is a course in training for employability and professional success, while the other three pillars will devote time to debates, professionals' practical accounts, preparation for job-hunting and professional work experience through internships, coaching, mentoring and meetings with potential employers, reported FAAPA. "By integrating the training course as proposed, young people with ambitions to become future leaders and decision-makers must become imbued with the desire to achieve the ideal of putting themselves at the service of their society," said Guy Patrick Massoloka, head of the FPA's department of cooperation and partnership, reported the Agence d'Information d'Afrique Centrale. At the official launch, the president of the FPA, Denis Christel Sassou N'Guesso, and the president of the National Commission of Human Rights, Gabriel Valère Eteka-Yemet, signed a partnership agreement between the two organisations. N'Guesso said: "The agreement we have signed aims to create links between us and the National Commission of Human Rights in the interest of the young people we hope to educate, with the intention of meeting the challenges that will confront our country in coming years," reported FAAPA
Read more here

9. University World News

Why 4IR won't happen and critical thinking still matters (South Africa)

Will the much-vaunted fourth industrial revolution (4IR) have the massive impacts on human life and work that its proponents suggest? Will it usher in an era of artificial intelligence and redundant workers? Or is it simply an intellectual trend that, like others, will fade away under the weight of unmet predictions? University of Johannesburg (UJ) academic and Executive Dean of Humanities Professor Alex Broadbent is not afraid to ask the difficult questions. He believes that 4IR will not happen because human intelligence, and reasoning about cause and effect, cannot be automated.

At a public dialogue on "Why the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) won't happen", Broadbent, who is also the director of the African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science, asked how the current situation differs from the 1960s' excitement about space travel, for example, which had humans colonising other planets by the turn of the century – and proved to be wrong. Insisting that he was not rebelling against UJ Vice-Chancellor Professor Tshilidzi Marwala, deputy chair of President Cyril Ramaphosa's digital commission, who has committed to radically transforming UJ in readiness for the 4IR, Broadbent said he can posit an alternative view without fear. "A number of people have asked me whether I'm rebelling," he said with a smile. "Others have asked the vice-chancellor whether he's going to call me to order. How can a talk like this be given at UJ (by an executive leader) when our strategy seems premised around the 4IR?" "It's called academic freedom," he said, stressing that UJ's goal and that of its vice-chancellor is to promote the study of 4IR, and not to promote catchphrases uncritically. "In the age of censorship by everyone, not just the state, freedom of expression and academic freedom become more important. Otherwise we have a lower chance of being right," said Broadbent. His argument is based on Bayes' Theorem, which describes how the conditional probability of each of a set of causes for a given observed outcome can be computed from knowledge of the probability of each cause and the conditional probability of the outcome of each cause. "Bayes' Theorem is our best guide to updating our beliefs. There are two kinds of arguments one can use for or against any given claim, and I'm going to consider both in what follows. I'm also going to indicate roughly how they connect to Bayes' Theorem. If you're into 4IR you must at least understand Bayes Theorem. Our VC does! Do you?" he said.

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