

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

**1. Standard Digital**

**University of Nairobi to scrap 40 courses (Kenya)**

The University of Nairobi is scrapping more than 40 courses as the Ministry of Education reforms plan starts to bite. A confidential document seen by the Sunday Standard reveals that some of the courses at the university had not attracted any students for the last five years. The document – rationalisation of academic programmes – tabled in the University Senate further says some of the courses to be dropped were either duplicated or have since been replaced. The courses list is compiled from recommendations made by about 10 university’s faculties, schools, institutes or centres. It is understood that the various faculties and schools will now have to defend why any of the courses must be retained in the university programmes list. The courses cut across certificates, diploma, bachelors, masters and PhD. The most-affected courses are from agriculture, mathematics, population studies and research institute, nursing science, translation and interpretation, biological sciences, African women studies, arts, institute of anthropology, gender and African studies and physical sciences. In recommending the scrapping of the courses, the University of Nairobi document makes reference to the requirement by the government on audit of academic programmes in universities to address quality and duplication. “Consequently, the university has undertaken to rationalise programmes and review or revise curricula to comply with the Commission for University Education (CUE) standards and guidelines,” reads the document. Education Cabinet Secretary George Magoha gave universities two weeks to make tough decisions on staff and programmes rationalisation. Prof Magoha also asked the public universities vice chancellors to recommend which of their universities and constituent colleges should be merged or shut down in the major reforms plan. In the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Nairobi, the PhD in Agriculture will be dropped. Three programmes in the School of Mathematics have also been listed for scrapping. These are BSc in Industrial Mathematics, PhD in Applied Statistics and PhD in Mathematics. A total of nine courses will be scrapped at the School of Biological Sciences, including three courses under Open Distance and e-Learning (OdeL). These are BSc in Microbiology and Biotechnology, BSc in Biology, BSc in Environmental Conservation and Natural Resources Management. Others are MSc in Agriculture Entomology, MSc in Medical and Veterinary Entomology, PhD in Applied Microbiology, PhD in Plant Ecology, PhD in Terrestrial Plant Ecology and PhD in Aquatic Plant Ecology. At the School of Physical Sciences, a total of 17 courses will be scrapped, including the Certificate in Chemistry.

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**2. University World News**

**Harness 4IR for the public good, universities urged (Africa)**

Internationally recognised as one of South Africa’s foremost computer scientists, disruption entrepreneur Stafford Masie gave academics food for thought at a high-powered forum addressing “Universities powering Africa's renaissance for the fourth industrial revolution [4IR]”. “I think that the way we teach children at school today will not be the way we do so in the future. I look at my own children and see that a lot of the knowledge required for the future, they won’t be taught at school. Imagination, for example, is not something taught at school.” Masie, the founder of innovative payment platform for small business Thumbzup, said the notion of going to university is already gone, with the rapidly increasing number of online courses one could take around the world, even at institutions like the private university Massachusetts Institute of Technology at Cambridge in the United States. “Now it’s about self-drive; education is a human story, not about textbooks only,” he said.

In his address entitled “A Call for Reimagination”, Masie, who worked for US firm Novell and helped establish Google in South Africa, told academics that students must be taught to harness the best of artificial

intelligence technology for harnessing good. Echoing the spirit of late Apple founder Steve Jobs, Masie said the greatest 4IR weapon, asset, attribute, value, competitive-edge, strength, edge ... any leader, enterprise, start up, individual must employ today is love. “It is the most powerful force in the universe and the substrate required to mitigate a very possible dystopia,” he said. Masie was the keynote speaker at the Times Higher Education (THE) Africa Universities Forum held in partnership with the University of Johannesburg, which took place from 12-13 June at the Hyatt Regency, in Rosebank, Johannesburg, South Africa. Academics from South Africa and the African continent explored how Africa's universities should develop awareness to strategically increase funding, reputation and research opportunities. They also heard about the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings and how universities fare in terms of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. This forum aimed to assess the institutional leadership required to foster excellence; explore how diversification of the African academy can prepare graduates for the fourth industrial revolution; and debate how the arts and humanities can play a central role in Africa's renaissance over the next 30 years.

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### **3. University World News**

#### **Challenges of attracting and retaining foreign faculty (Ethiopia)**

The value of international faculty in terms of infusing talent and diversity and improving the status of any given higher education system, is widely acknowledged. Despite the similarity of interest in attracting such faculty, the purposes for which international faculty are hired differ from one context to the other. Inevitably, this difference of purpose is reflected in the operational tasks of attracting, recruiting, hiring and retaining international faculty. Ethiopia is a country that has never been colonised, but the history of its modern education reflects a heavy and systemic dependence on foreign personnel. The indelible marks of foreign expatriates are noticeable in areas such as the establishment of schools, the design of policies and curricula and their employment as advisers, officials, principals and teachers in the various levels of the education system. When Ethiopia's first Western modern institution, Menelik II School, was opened in 1908, it had to rely on Egyptian Copts. Both the principal and the teachers involved in the Teferi Mekonen School, which was set up later, in 1925, were similarly international faculty who came mainly from French Lebanon, while the position of administrator was left to Hakim Workneh Eshete, a foreign-educated Ethiopian. Ethiopia's modest attempt to kickstart its modern education system before the beginning of the Italo-Ethiopian war in 1935 was staffed by a few hundred teachers, including foreign faculty. Before the war, French was the dominant foreign language used in schools. After the Italian occupation (1935-41), which was responsible for annihilating or forcing into migration a large number of local intelligentsia, Ethiopia had again to rely on foreign professionals to rebuild its modern education system from scratch. As a result of the Allied Forces' assistance in liberating Ethiopia in 1941, the period from 1942 until 1952 was dominated by the significant presence and influence of the British in the education sector and other government ministries. British experts and teachers were replaced by Americans in the second half of the 1950s, due to Ethiopia's strengthened links with the United States through what was then called the Point Four Program of Technical Assistance (later renamed as the Agency for International Development). In the next two decades, the United States had a huge influence in many sectors, including education, where it was involved in reorganising the ministry of education, supplying needed manpower, materials and textbooks and setting up the first higher education institutions in the country. When the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA, the first institution of higher learning in the country) was established in 1950, the teachers and its president were Jesuit Canadians. As a matter of fact, UCAA had no Ethiopian faculty during the first four years of its existence. The same was true about a handful of colleges that were founded from 1950 to 1960. The number and nationalities of international faculty recruited in these higher education institutions were

influenced by how they were established, the nationalities of their leaders and the employment policies of each particular institution. Although there was some change toward the end of the Imperial government, as a result of the deliberate 'Ethiopianisation' policy it pursued, the Haile Selassie I University (HSIU, now Addis Ababa University) remained dominated by international faculty. In 1973, 54% of the HSIU staff were foreigners. The balance between international and local staff in Ethiopian higher education institutions changed significantly after the 1974 revolution, which drove many foreign staff out of the country owing to the country's adoption of a socialist policy and its subsequent relation with countries of the Eastern bloc. The huge gap created by the departure of Western expats was filled by staff recruited from socialist countries, but the dependence on foreign faculty continued for as long as a decade after the socialist government assumed power. Out of the total number of university staff, 934, in 1982-83, some 335 (36%) were foreigners. The dominance of international faculty in senior academic positions was much more pronounced.

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#### **4. University World News**

##### **Universities as a direct partner in local development (Ghana)**

The University for Development Studies was founded in 1993 by the government of Ghana. Its main purpose is for the university to collaborate with communities to find solutions to the environmental, social and economic problems plaguing the northern regions of Ghana. It was envisaged that this model of university would provide a conduit for the construction of effective university-community partnerships for formulating and implementing development plans or projects. Currently, the University for Development Studies (UDS) operates four satellite campuses in the three northern regions of Ghana: Wa Campus (Upper West Region), Navrongo Campus (Upper East Region) and Tamale and Nyankpala (Northern Region). The Nyankpala campus is located in Nyankpala township, part of the Tolon District, about 15 kilometres south-west of Tamale, the capital city of the Northern Region. Nyankpala is a rural town with a population of about 21,000 people. Subsistence agriculture in the form of crop farming, such as rice, maize, millet and groundnuts, and livestock production, consisting of cattle, sheep, goats and guinea fowl, are the primary economic activities in the town. But it faces a very significant challenge from water shortages. The climate of Nyankpala is tropical, greatly influenced by the south-west monsoons from the South Atlantic and the Northeast Trade Winds (Harmattan) from the Sahara Desert. The area has a monomodal rainfall pattern, which starts in April-May and ends in October. The average annual rainfall is about 1,157 millimetres. The dry season kicks off around November. The day temperatures range between 33 and 39 degrees Celsius, and at night the temperature drops to an average of 20-26 degrees Celsius. The present water access situation in Nyankpala may be described as a crisis. While the township has a pipe-borne water system, water flow is very irregular. Even UDS relies on water tanker services to meet its water needs. Many members of the university community, and some affluent residents of the township, own poly tanks of varying capacities of between 1,000-5,000 litres. Nevertheless, the majority of the poor residents are compelled to travel distances carrying containers of assorted sizes on their heads, backs or in hands to an irrigation dam to fetch water for daily consumption. The water situation makes it almost impossible for the majority of the town's residents to adopt flush toilet technology. Consequently, open defecation, locally referred to as 'free range', is not uncommon. It is also cost inefficient for any water-based processing factories to be built in that township. The incidence of contaminated water with its health consequences of cholera, typhoid and dysentery is commonplace in the township. In short, the water situation in the township has significantly increased the health burden of the poor.

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## 5. Business Daily

### Universities given two-week ultimatum on mergers (Kenya)

The Education ministry has given universities two weeks to prepare a list of the institutions to be merged and those to be shut down. At a meeting with vice-chancellors and finance officers of the 31 chartered public universities and seven university colleges, Education Secretary George Magoha asked the administrators to lay ground for the drastic measures. The Commission for University Education (CUE) will also submit its report on the merger on July 31, which is different from what vice-chancellors are expected to draft. At the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development where the closed-door meeting took place yesterday, vice-chancellors protested the directive, saying it was being undertaken without involving all stakeholders. The vice-chancellors are expected to come up with the number of academic or non-academic staff to be laid off, the programmes to be merged and campuses to be closed. The decision is a blow to more than 27,000 staff in public universities, among them 9,000 lecturers. Some of the issues discussed at the closed-door meeting included pending bills, pension, taxes, debts and Sacco remittances. Already the University of Nairobi has identified 20 programmes to be phased out. The vice-chancellors also told the Education secretary that the new policy is coming from the top and not from universities which ought to have provided “critical mechanism” of the plan. The Universities Academic Staff Union (Uasu) has joined the debate by opposing the plan. “We need sobriety in this whole process or else we will mess up. We have to involve all stakeholders including politicians,” said a vice-chancellor who asked not to be named. Vice-chancellors also complained that the government has been “talking to itself” in the whole process and wondered where students leaving secondary schools under 100 percent transition plan will go to. During the meeting, Prof. Magoha ruled out any extra funding to the institutions saying they will have to use the Sh97 billion allocated to them.

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