

Kenyan universities ranked top in East Africa in ICT

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Kenyan universities edged out their East African counterparts to emerge top in a new survey focused on the adoption of information and communication technology in higher education. Private universities outperformed public institutions and Uganda's Makerere University was placed first. Kenyan universities edged out their East African counterparts to emerge top in a new survey focused on the adoption of information and communication technology in higher education. Private universities outperformed public institutions and Uganda's Makerere University was placed first.

The survey by the research firm CPS international, sponsored by the Pan African Education Trust, found East African universities to be increasingly embracing ICT in teaching and learning and comparing favourably with international universities in the use of technology.

Kenyan universities, the survey showed, are leading the pack in the use and accessibility of ICT in education in East Africa, while Burundi is lagging behind. Uganda came in second, Tanzania third and Rwanda fourth. The five countries make up the East African Community.

The survey, conducted among 250 institutions and based on data collection and interviews, showed that ICT has opened up East African universities to sharing and accessing academic and research materials and corporate information.

"The use of websites, subscribing to academic journals, use of intranet, social media and other e-learning tools have revolutionised the academic sector in East Africa," said Dann Mwangi, CPS regional director.

Kenya had invested more heavily in ICT than other East African countries while Burundi has invested the least, the survey showed.

However, double intakes of students by public universities in Kenya have reduced their ratio of students to ICT facilities in the past two years. Kenya has been rolling out a double-intake plan in a rush to clear a longstanding admissions backlog of 40,000 students.

The CPS survey comes at a time when Kenya is considering a national university [ranking system](#) in an effort to boost quality and make institutions more globally competitive.

A proposed ranking has been crafted that will see universities compete across a range of indicators. The ranking system, developed by the Commission for Higher Education, is also aimed at helping students to choose the best institutions and study programmes.

Ranking of universities in Kenya is an emotive issue, with rivalry among institutions rising and claims of bias usually accompanying surveys. Competition has been triggered by rapidly growing student numbers and the emergence of more universities, presenting students with a wider choice.

"Ranking can foster healthy competition among higher education institutions while a university can use its position on that ranking as leverage to secure funding and grants," said CPS.

However, the report added, rankings can also work against students as some employers use them to measure probable graduate success and are less likely to recruit graduates from universities that are not

well placed.

Kenyan universities rely on international ranking institutions, such as Webometrics in Spain, to gauge their reputation in the continental and global higher education arenas. Webometrics is based on the web presence of universities.

The CPS survey, carried out between April and October 2012, focused on how institutions have embraced the use of ICT in teaching and enhancing quality and effective education.

In terms of the number of universities appearing in the [Top 100](#) in the CPS rankings, Uganda had the highest number, which researchers attributed to the fact that Uganda has more fully fledged universities than any other East African country.

Government statistics show that Uganda has 45 universities, with the majority being full universities, while most of Kenya's 67 institutions are constituent university colleges. Tanzania has 23 higher education institutions, Rwanda 24 and Burundi five.

Kenyan universities, however, took six out of the top 10 positions: Strathmore University, Multimedia University College, African Virtual University, University of Nairobi, Mount Kenya University and Kenyatta University.

Uganda's Makerere University (pictured) was number one in the ranking, followed by Strathmore University. Rwanda's School of Finance and Banking topped the list of Rwanda's institutions while the University of Dar es Salaam was Tanzania's peak institution.

Upcoming constituent university colleges of public universities in Kenya had better ICT facilities generally than the main universities, while private universities had invested more in ICT than public universities in all the East African countries.

"Further, private universities mostly offering business courses and social sciences have performed better in the use of ICT than public universities offering similar disciplines," reads the CPS report.

"Public universities performed poorly because the bulk of students supported by governments are admitted to study business and other related social sciences courses, which overstretched ICT resources."

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