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Academic Performance in comparative perspective

East Africa has traditionally had good universities. The data collected and made available by Scimago allow one to assess how good East African universities are in comparative perspective.

Addis Ababa University, Makerere University, the University of Dar es Salaam, and the University of Nairobi are the best universities in respectively, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya.

Makerere University is the highest ranked of the four. Makerere University, in spite of the problems it experienced in the past couple of years, is the 646th university in the world, Addis Ababa is 689th, the University of Nairobi is 719th while the University of Dar es Salaam is 782th.

Considering that the income per capita in these countries is considerably lower than in advanced industrialized societies and that, subordinately, the resources made available to universities are scarce, the performance of these universities is remarkable.

Makerere University outranks both the University of Urbino-Carlo Bo (661th in the global rankings) and the Azienda Ospedaliera di Verona (650th in the world) and is in the same league with the University of Camerino (626th) and with the University of Sassari (632nd).

Addis Ababa University is only 28 position behind the University of Urbino-Carlo Bo and is on par with the University del Molise (681st in the global ranking), while the University of Nairobi (719th) is pretty much on par with Bocconi University (712th).

university	Position in the overall rankings
University of Udine	608
University of Camerino	626
University of Sassari	632
Makerere University	646
Azienda Ospedaliera di Verona	650
University of Urbino-Carlo Bo	661
University of Molise	681
Addis Ababa University	689
Bocconi University	712
University of Nairobi	719

These results suggest a simple conclusion, namely that with meager resources several East African Universities are as good as Italian universities or, conversely, that the performance of Italian universities is as good as that of universities in the developing world.

The fact that Italian universities operate in a considerably richer context, have often a long history and tradition and have more resources that could possibly mobilized in the developing world, leads one to believe that Italian universities greatly outperform East African ones.

Sadly for Italy or fortunately for East Africa, that is not the case. Makerere university, in terms of research, outperforms the university of Urbino, the University of Camerino, the University of Molise, the University Gabriele D'Annunzio of Chieti and Pescara, Azienda Ospedaliera di Verona, the University of Sassari, and the University of Udine.

The University of Nairobi outperforms at least 2 Italian Universities. Addis Ababa University is on par with the Azienda Ospedaliera di Verona and better than at least three Italian universities.

university	Rankings for research
Makerere	343
Udine	354
D'Annunzio	365
Sassari	380

Addis Ababa	382
Azienda Ospedaliera di Verona	382
Molise	403
Nairobi	404
Camerino	406
Urbino	410

East African universities are able to do more with less and one could only imagine what they'd be able to produce if they were given the resources that are available to their Italian counterparts. But while this is good news for East Africa, one has to wonder about how university administrators in Italy feel about the fact that their respective institutions are outperformed by considerably poorer East African institutions.

This evidence suggests a final consideration. Some countries, including those in Sub-Saharan Africa, are on the right track. Italy is clearly not among them and it will end up, slowly but surely, precisely where it deserves to be.