AFRICA: South Africa, Egypt dominate new ranking
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There are 11 South African and four Egyptian universities in the latest Africa Top 20 of the Web Ranking of World Universities, which rates institutions based on the size and quality of their internet presence. There is also one institution each from Kenya, Senegal, Namibia, Morocco and Tanzania.

The generally poor internet connectivity of Africa's universities place the continent at a distinct disadvantage in terms of electronic ranking measurement. Those countries with the greatest connectivity, notably South Africa and Egypt, have the most universities in the Top 100, and with 16 institutions in the Top 100 Morocco also achieves a strong presence.

Since the Web Ranking, produced by the Cybermetrics Lab of Spain's National Research Council, achieves similar results to other internationally respected rankings systems, it is argued that website presence is a valid indicator of a university's standing in the world of academia.

What sets the Web Ranking apart from others is that it lists 4,000 out of 16,000 institutions surveyed around the world and ranks universities within their regions, enabling continents such as Africa - few of whose universities are listed in the Top 500 in the world - to gain some idea of how their institutions are faring compared to others in the region.

The ranking is produced twice a year and measures the total number of pages on each institution's website, the numbers of 'rich' documents (which tend to contain academic content) and scientific documents, as well as the number of external organisation's links to the website (an electronic equivalent of counting citations in academic journals).

The University of Cape Town heads the latest Web Ranking list of Top 100 universities in Africa, followed - in order of ranking - by the universities of Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Rhodes, the Witwatersrand, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape.

Other South African universities also appearing in the Top 20 are the huge distance University of South Africa (9), Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (11), the University of the Free State (13) and the University of Johannesburg (19).

A further seven South African institutions make it into the Top 100 list, including only foreign-owned Monash University South Africa. And so 18 of the country's 23 public universities are represented.

Egypt's four Top 20 institutions are the American University in Cairo, in eighth position, Cairo University (10), Mansoura University (15) and Ain Shams University (20). All in all, 17 Egyptian higher education institutions are in the Top 100 Africa list.

Kenya's Strathmore University, in Nairobi, comes in at number 12 while Senegal's Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar is at 14. Also in the Top 20 are Polytechnic of Namibia (16), Morocco's Université Cadi Ayyad (17) and the University of Dar Es Salaam in the Tanzanian capital (18).

The University of Mauritius is ranked at 21, followed by Kenya's University of Nairobi (22), Algeria's Université Abou Bekr Belkaid Tlemcen (23), Morroco's École Mohammadia d'Ingenieurs (24), University of Zimbabwe (25), University of Namibia (26), National University of Rwanda (27), Egypt's Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport (28), Al Akhawayn University Ifrane in Morocco (29), and Tanzania's Sokoine University of Agriculture (30).

Despite its large higher education sector, only three Nigerian universities - Ibadan, Benin and Obafemi Awolowo - made the Top 100 list, reflecting the lack of internet connectivity of that country's institutions.