

## Towards African Higher Education Transformation: Building Thought Leadership in University Leadership and Management

### A SIDE EVENT CONCEPT NOTE

#### Capacity Development Programme for Leadership in African Universities Round II

<b>Background</b>	<p>Higher Education is critical for skilling Africa’s workforce and ensuring that it is increasingly competitive in a globalized market place and an increasingly dominant knowledge economy. University Vice chancellors are responsible for steering their universities to deliver functions of 21st century flagship and world class universities where cutting edge content, technology, methods and practices are defining and redefining trends in knowledge creation and linkages to national priorities as well as overall sustainable development. The leadership role of Vice Chancellors is encumbered by a backdrop of challenges that require unique insights of thought leadership. Challenges faced by African universities include; inadequate funding particularly for research; phenomenal growth in student numbers with little increase in infrastructure and teaching staff; limited autonomy and academic freedom; financial constraints; heightened expectations of stakeholders; weak linkages of teaching and research to national economic priorities; and, insufficient institutional quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms as well as management capacity. Addressing these challenges requires the retooling of thought leaders at the universities to transform the way universities conduct their core business.</p> <p>The above context underscores the need for targeted capacity building to enhance competencies that can greatly influence the performance and outcomes of universities. While trainings on leadership and management have been documented mostly for mid-level managers at universities, few have targeted university Vice Chancellors/Rectors/Presidents. Those that targeted the Chief Executives were often overly general and with emphasis on broad management skills rather than enhancing thought leadership. Trainings on cooperate governance; strategic planning, resource mobilization and management predominate. These issues are apparent in many forums but they are covered superficially in terms of content and method, stifling opportunities for engagement and development of critical competencies. This in part explains why such trainings are low on the priority lists of most universities. Yet, university leadership ought to understand the dynamics of the university environment, the emerging patterns, and to be able to combine those patterns with vision to solve real-world problems. Experience takes time, patience, hard work and a willingness to listen and learn from others. University leadership therefore needs to work with mentors and influencers, to talk to them about their passions, big ideas and what keeps them up at night. They need to network and seek out opportunities to connect with a range of stakeholders. In short, university leaders have to be thought leaders. A thought leader is one who inspires others to think, to innovate, self-motivate, and reach their highest potential. Inspiring other people in this way requires personal traits and skills that far exceed expert knowledge.</p>
<b>Purpose of the Side Event</b>	<p>The aim of the programme is to strengthen leadership and governance capacities of public university leaders in Africa in order to make their universities more competitive. Specifically, it will enable the university leaders to share ideas, examine best practices and see how best these could be adapted to suit the unique situation of respective universities.</p>



<b>Objectives of the side Event</b>	<p>The specific objectives of the training event are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen contextual understanding of university operations;</li> <li>2. Broaden and deepen leadership and governance acumen of Vice chancellors, and Deans and Principals;</li> <li>3. Demonstrate a clear appreciation of the essence of a culture of excellence;</li> <li>4. Design effective strategies for addressing leadership challenges based on the available opportunities.</li> </ol>
<b>Approach and Methodology</b>	<p>The programme will be delivered face-to-face in exceptional learning moments. Delivery will be organized around interactive and experiential sessions involving sharing of knowledge among peers as well as drawing on videos clips, relevant case studies and on learning points harnessed from a wealth of knowledge resources for discussion, simulation and role playing to impart knowledge, skills and competencies that enhance leadership capacities.</p>
<b>Venue and Participants</b>	<p>The Leadership training will be held at the BICC in Lilongwe, Malawi. This training is designed for three groups of participants that are critical at the University management Hierarchy these include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Vice Chancellors and Rectors of RUFORUM universities</li> <li>2. Deputy Vice Chancellors and Directors of RUFORUM Universities</li> <li>3. RUFORUM Deans and Principals who are the primary heads of academic programmes in the universities.</li> </ol>
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### Annex 1: Detailed Programme will be Provided by the Trainers

