

18th RUFORUM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA: MOVING FROM DIALOGUE TO ACTION

Date: 05th September 2022

Time: 14:30 – 17:30 EAT

Venue: Virtual

Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/3yMP1SI>

Concept note

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Background

Universities worldwide have traditionally performed three functions: teaching, research and outreach. And stakeholder feedback in Africa and elsewhere seems to confirm that teaching and to a lesser extent research have been key focus of university efforts. The impact of universities outside their 'walls' and indeed to the societies they were created to serve remains at question. University 'outreach' has remained undefined and unsupported, resulting in unclear outcomes and limited use of university knowledge for community transformation. Further, the transfer of the knowledge produced by the universities to the end-users took place through intermediate agents, typically the professionals working in enterprises or government bodies and through high technology enterprises symbiotically related to the university¹. Consequently, the rules that once applied outside the academia have become the standard in the university faculty as well. This provides universities with opportunity to transform themselves for relevance to national governments by supporting youth to harness their innovativeness through the education processes and nurture them into valuable assets that contribute significantly to the national economic growth as well as regional development.

As higher education institutions strive for transformation, recent events arising from the COVID-19 pandemic that brought the education sector to a grinding halt irrespective of the economic status of countries revealed even the greater need for transformation at various levels. Firstly, universities were found in a deplorable financial mess across many economies. A mess partly orchestrated by long and persistent history of catalytic enrollment in higher education. For the case of Africa for example, gross enrollment into tertiary education currently estimated at 914.6 million students out of the 220.7 million global number has come over a short-time period in the last 10 years². This rapid growth in numbers has largely not been matched with a growth in

¹ Sutz, J. (1997). The new role of the university in the productive sector. Universities and the global knowledge economy, 11-20.

² <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=202107051145016>

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financial, human resources as well as financial resources to offer quality education in many universities in the region especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Covid-19 thus added a weight of demands to already struggling universities and other tertiary education institutions. But, it has also perhaps provided the higher education sector with opportunity to reimagine itself.

Accordingly, the higher education sector requires a transformation approach that enables institutions to operate more flexibly and resiliently in the long term. This will help institutions emerge on a stronger footing from today’s challenges and brace for those of the future. But such a transformation requires an intense, operations-wide program focused on improving student outcomes and boosting organizational health and performance. Comprehensive transformational learning remains a needed ingredient in African universities to day to among others; develop not only academic knowledge, but also intellectual, professional, physical, spiritual and emotional aspects of the students. The transformational approach that universities adopt and/or adapt should inspire, guide and equip the students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to meet their aspirations, access resources and grow into qualified, skilled and knowledgeable graduates. Such graduates have to be capable of realizing their individual targeted future through finding their way through entrepreneurship, leadership, appropriate employability and/or agri-business venturing. They also possess the agility and the ability to innovate and lead the progress of their societies and of research and knowledge in their domains to realize targeted developmental impact. Such transformation should connect universities to society, away from ‘ivory tower’ thinking, so that universities are understood and better valued by wider the society.

Making this transformation of how universities approach business and processes of facilitating teaching and learning as well as the broader ecosystem interaction requires significant shifts. It calls for universities to take radical yet deliberate steps towards re-organizing curricular including teaching and learning approaches and delivery and investing in ‘new’ and rewarding processes and actions such as business incubation centres and facilities that allow learners to explore and test their business and entrepreneurial acumen. Universities need to give greater focus at ensuring that they deliver entrepreneurial graduates; those that are connected to the realities of life. While this is the case, managing transformation presents challenges for educators and education administrators as new pedagogies and technologies continue to materialize, driving the need for effective strategic planning and decision-making processes that guide their implementation³.

The dialogue

This dialogue seeks to bring together stakeholders within the higher education landscape to share evidence of implementing transformation within universities in Africa and beyond. It seeks to bring a convergence of purpose, evidence and practice to catalyse transformational actions among earminging and established universities. There will be simultaneous translation in Arabic, English, French and Portuguese languages.

³ Bennett, N. J., Whitty, T. S., Finkbeiner, E., Pittman, J., Bassett, H., Gelcich, S., & Allison, E. H. (2018). Environmental stewardship: a conceptual review and analytical framework. *Environmental management*, 61(4), 597-614.

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Programme

Session Moderator: Ms. Nono Dimakatso Sekhoto, Programme Lead, ALA for Agribusiness Network, African Leadership Academy, South Africa

Time	Discussion Issue
14:45 - 15:00	Login and videos of the transformation process
15:00 - 15:10	Opening remarks: Prof. Adipala Ekwamu , Executive Secretary, RUFORUM
15:10 - 15:25	Transforming Higher Education Programme: Pillars and model for success, Dr. James French , GCHERA Secretary General
15:25 - 15:40	Discussion and response to questions
15:40 - 15:55	Developing institutional mechanisms and processes for effecting transformation in Higher Education. Mr. Veda Sunassee , Chief Executive Officer, African Leadership University
15:55 - 16:10	Transformative Learning to develop critical reflective thinking in learners. Mr. Jonathan Harle , Director of Programmes, INASP UK
16:10 - 16:30	Discussion
16:30 - 16:45	Issues and Challenges in Fostering Institutional Transformation Prof. David Jambgwa Simbi , Vice Chancellor, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe
16:45 - 17:05	General Discussion
17:05 - 17:15	Summary and Closing Remarks by the Session Moderator

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