



The Sixth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2018

Date: 22-26 October 2018

Venue: Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC), Nairobi, Kenya

Summary Conference Report

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The development of higher education systems is critically important to Africa, in the context of its youth dividend, fast expanding population¹ and changing demography. Africa's labor force is expected to surpass one billion by 2040, representing one quarter of the World's population, surpassing China and India.
- 1.2 Demand for higher education, as well as technical and vocational education in Africa will continue to increase in the next decade, putting massive pressure on the quality and relevance of education. Skills are needed to drive the transformation needed in Africa's food system and indeed across all important sectors such as health, science, engineering, and humanities. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) at all levels, should play a pivotal role in training the required critical mass of human resources required to deploy science, technology and innovation.
- 1.3 The Sixth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference (hereafter 'the Conference') was organized from the 22-26 October 2018 at the Kenyatta International Convention Center in Nairobi, Kenya. The overall objective of the Conference was to provide a platform for all key stakeholders to dialogue on important issues to guide Africa's higher education sector into the future, taking into consideration important challenges for the system as well as linkages with other components of the education system, including technical vocational education and training (TVET). The Conference discussed how African universities can play a stronger role in catalyzing the attainment of African Union's Agenda 2063 under the theme "Aligning African Universities to Accelerate Attainment of Agenda 2063".
- 1.4 The key objectives of the meeting were to: i) identify current and future trends in higher education and appropriate models and approaches to facilitate university and farming community transformation to meet AU Agenda 2063; ii) link graduate research and training to entrepreneurship and business development as a mechanism to increase the relevance of African universities to national economic growth; iii) provide graduate students and young innovators a platform to showcase their research, cutting-edge innovations and enterprises and entrepreneurial acumen and identify how they can be mentored; and, iv) provide policy, development actors, governments and civil society, a platform to network and discuss contextually relevant innovations for transforming higher agricultural education in Africa.

¹ Africa's population is expected to pass 2.5 billion by 2050, growing from the current 1.5 billion today.

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- 1.5 The Government of Kenya through its Ministry of Education and nine RUFORUM member universities in Kenya were the lead organizers of the Conference.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. The Conference was officially opened by H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya, in an address read by Ambassador (Dr.) Amina Mohammed, Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kenya. The Honorable Mrs. Janet Kataaha Museveni, Uganda First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, and the Hon. Naledi Pandor, Minister for Higher Education, South Africa provided keynote addresses prior to the official Conference opening.
- 2.2. A total of 1107 higher education stakeholders participated in the Conference including over 20 ministers responsible for education, science and technology from 19 African countries, 30 senior government officials and experts, 105 Vice Chancellors, 110 Principals and Deans, 530 students, and representatives of farmer organizations/ cooperatives, the private sector/ industry and civil society.
- 2.3. Prior to the Conference, from 16-21 October, over 20 pre-conference events were held including trainings on intellectual property rights management (in partnership with the World Intellectual Property Organization -WIPO, and the African Regional Intellectual Property Rights Organization -ARIPO), leadership and management, an information session on funding opportunities in Horizon 2020 for EU-Africa partnerships, social media training, training for public relations officers of universities, Grain legumes and dryland cereals for nutritional enhancement (partnership with the CGIAR Research Program on Grain Legumes and Dryland Cereals), the Forum for Women Vice Chancellors in Africa, a round table meeting of higher education ministers from African countries, and a high level dialogue between Africa and Korea on higher education. Six RUFORUM statutory organ meetings were also held including the meetings of the RUFORUM Annual General Meeting, Board, Principals and Deans, Technical and International Advisory Panels of RUFORUM.
- 2.4. Twelve plenary sessions were held that focused on key topical issues for which greater knowledge and evidence was needed to guide decision makers. These included “Towards Agenda 2063: Catalyzing university role in influencing policy and setting development agenda”; “Converging the power of investment in Higher Education to transform Africa”; “Unravelling University, Community and Private Sector Engagement for agricultural transformation in Africa”; “Skilling Africa’s youth: the role of TVETs”; “Harnessing Africa’s Youth Budge: Innovation, entrepreneurship and agribusiness incubation”; “Increasing the pool of women scientists in Africa”; “Harnessing regional and global partnerships for Higher Education innovation in Africa”; “Moving Africa’s development agenda forward: ingredients for success”; ‘Harnessing the digital potential to drive agricultural/Higher education transformation forward”; “Building Foresight capacity to guide Africa’s development”; and “ Strengthening food and nutrition security in Africa”. These were complimented by 18 technical parallel sessions. One such technical session was the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)-Academia-Parliamentarians dialogue.

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3.0 REMARKS FROM GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

- 3.1. Ambassador Dr. Amina Mohammed, Cabinet Secretary for Education, on behalf of the Government of Kenya committed to work with RUFORUM and other stakeholders to support the strengthening of staff capacities and research facilities in Kenyan Universities. She also highlighted the importance of intra-African cooperation in research and training and increasing the pool of women scientists in Kenya. She committed to support the Africa's Universities Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Agenda and called upon African Member States to endorse the RUFORUM Charter.
- 3.2. The Honorable Mrs. Janet Kataaha Museveni, Uganda's First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, committed to supporting operations of the RUFORUM Secretariat and endorsement of the RUFORUM Charter. She endorsed Uganda's participation in a regional initiative to Build Africa's Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity (BASTIC) and the Strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa (SHAEA) initiative. She confirmed that Uganda will provide land and support for construction of RUFORUM Secretariat headquarters in Kampala, Uganda.
- 3.3. Hon. Naledi Pandor, Minister for Higher Education, South Africa noted that Universities and researchers need academic freedom and freedom of expression. She also highlighted that effective science policy needs international partnerships. Policy makers must provide funding for high level development of graduates and support for both established and emerging researchers. However, periodic evaluation of initiatives is required and the trust deficit between governments and knowledge institutions needs to be closed.

4.0 KEY MESSAGES FROM THE CONFERENCE

4.1 *Strengthening innovation and industry through Intellectual property management*

- 4.1.1. Africa has a lot of young, creative talent that needs to be mentored and nurtured and supported to commercialize innovations. Youth need mentorship more than money.
- 4.1.2. There is need to adopt skills-based curricula and mindset change for youth to produce practical oriented problem solvers.
- 4.1.3. African universities should effectively harness the Intellectual Property (IP) System to enhance commercialization of research outputs and to stimulate creativity linked to industrialization in Africa.
- 4.1.4. There is need to transform the way graduates are trained to have relevant skills for industry.
- 4.1.5. University leadership need to create an enabling policy, culture, and strategic environment for innovation by students and staff. Universities need to partner with each other and industry for uptake, patenting, and commercialization of innovation products and establishment of enterprises.
- 4.1.6. Need for investors (Government and others) to partner and link agriculture to industrialization and rural transformation.
- 4.1.7. Government should invest in youth entrepreneurship to harness and bring innovations to scale

4.2 *Increasing the participation of women in training and research for development*

- 4.2.1. Gender should move beyond accommodating women to providing a conducive environment to build confidence of women, mentorship and role modeling.

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- 4.2.2. There is an urgent need for women role models to mentor girls to choose and pursue science/leadership roles.
- 4.2.3. Scholarships should provide a family-friendly environment for female post-graduate students.
- 4.2.4. Agricultural Tertiary and Vocational Education and Training (ATVET) institutions are neither junior universities nor competitors but complimentary to universities.
- 4.2.5. Need for gender equitable financing mechanisms in higher education and research.
- 4.2.6. As part of efforts to enhance mentorship to women in leadership positions, The Female Women Vice Chancellors Forum (FAWoVC) was launched. The Constitution for FAWoVC was also adopted. Professor Mary Okwakol, Vice Chancellor Busitema University in Uganda was elected as the first FAWoVC President
- 4.2.7. Development partners to adopt initiatives that promote gender inclusive funding approaches.
- 4.2.8. There needs to be willingness and ability to partner in creating institutions and research processes that are inclusive of the needs, perspectives and voices of women.

4.3 *Catalysing University role in influencing policy and setting development agenda*

- 4.3.1. African countries should earmark budgets for developing and retaining critical technical skills (CTS) at TVET, Masters, PhD and in R&D.
- 4.3.2. Universities need to enhance visibility of what they do to be more competitive in the global environment.
- 4.3.3. Investing in research & higher education is critical to solving development challenges.
- 4.3.4. Convergence of different financing mechanisms for collective benefit for Africa is needed.
- 4.3.5. Quality control for more returns to investment in higher education and research is needed.
- 4.3.6. Recognize the complementary role of communities, researchers, and private sector in agricultural transformation.
- 4.3.7. Private public partnerships for financing higher education and research is key.
- 4.3.8. Convergence of African policy towards investment in agriculture, food and nutrition and human capital development is required.
- 4.3.9. Develop appropriate partnership tools integral of Africa's religious, cultural, and economic diversity.
- 4.3.10. Universities need to address the aspirations in the Agenda 2063 by sharing competencies and providing evidence for policy making.

4.4 *Curriculum reform and matching investments with needs*

- 4.4.1. Need to tighten links between universities, government, industry, non-state actors, and labor markets
- 4.4.2. Science values should be inculcated among young people starting from home at a young age
- 4.4.3. Africa needs to stimulate transformational entrepreneurship especially among young people
- 4.4.4. Integration of courses on foresight into university curricula is key for building foresight capacity
- 4.4.5. Foresight key to address the dilemma of how to balance soaring enrolments at universities and country plans and strategies both for now and future
- 4.4.6. Curricula should be reviewed to meet required skills both for now and the future

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- 4.4.7. Government role remains central in driving transformation of economies through an enabling environment, planning, coordination, implementation and accountability
- 4.4.8. Africa has limited foresight capacity and this needs to be urgently addressed

5.0 MEETING CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1. Enhance the sharing of knowledge, lessons and experiences with international and regional partners to facilitate and accelerate university transformation for relevance in Africa
- 5.2. Focus on strengthening agribusiness innovation in Africa through improving the entrepreneurial spirit of graduates to contribute to employment creation for young people, both through self-employment and the creation of new employment opportunities;
- 5.3. Make use of academic mobility to accelerate the training of a critical mass of well qualified faculty in Africa and ensure that they are retained locally to support teaching and research. The RUFORUM Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) is a good example of a strong self-help program that needs to be supported;
- 5.4. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Africa Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO), Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) and RUFORUM to develop partnership to strengthen university participation in IP
- 5.5. Strengthen use of ICTs to improve the decentralization of teaching and learning, enhance access to the wider public, and reduce the costs of education in Africa;

The Conference further recommended that:

- 5.6. To take the commendations of the Biennial Conference, including from the Meeting of Ministers to the Committee of Ten Heads of State championing Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa;
- 5.7. Bridge the gender gap in science by increasing the female participation in support of Agenda 2063 vision of quality education and gender equality.
- 5.8. Strengthen foresight capacity at African universities and other partners' institutions and support capacity building in this important area to support planning and future implementation of key programs.
- 5.9. Establish a regional initiative to Build Africa's Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity (BASTIC)
- 5.10. Endorse the expansion and strengthening of postgraduate training in Agriculture, Science, Technology and Innovation through Africa's Higher Agricultural Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (AHESTI) in alignment with AU educational frameworks.
- 5.11. Commit to work through national mechanisms to legitimize the work of RUFORUM in the Member States through a Charter to be endorsed by the respective Governments in line with the Member States' established procedures.
- 5.12. Invite participants to Benin for the Seventh Africa Higher Education Week and the RUFORUM Triennial Conference in 2021.

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