

Realignment towards Online Teaching and Learning in Universities: Learning from each other

High Level Dialogue at the RUFORUM 16th Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Date: 18th November 2020

Time: 15.00-19.00 (East African Standard Time)

Venue: Virtual via Zoom (Meeting link: [Click here](#), Zoom ID: **862 7486 5368**, Passcode: **303988**)

Background

The recent crisis due to outbreak of corona virus disease of 2019 (Covid-19) has clearly demonstrated Africa's vulnerability to global pandemics and other natural emergencies such as floods and desert locusts, which struck the Eastern part of Africa in recent years. Owing to the myriad constraints, including limited internal and resident infrastructure capacity, Africa's education sector has been severely affected by Covid-19. COVID-19 is unleashing a public health crisis, with widespread consequences for economically vulnerable populations in Africa with one result being that many universities remain not fully operational. Without a deliberate response, this could erode hard-earned development gains and threaten social and economic stability, especially for young women and men, already coping at the margins throughout Africa.

The only viable option for universities in this state of emergency is digitization of services to ensure that teaching and learning continues. When approached in a proper manner, this can greatly help in rebuilding the education system, which has been disrupted and possibly provide the much needed resilience we have experienced. Amidst the ongoing global COVID-19 crisis, and considering the projected trends and challenges, Africa is in urgent need of strengthened capacity in education, research, science, technology and innovation. University leaders must therefore collectively reimagine higher education amidst the pandemic crisis and build a revolutionized teaching and learning environment, prioritizing the use of modern digital technologies.

It has been suggested that digital technologies can play a significant role in higher education, with the potential for transformation as well as disruption. There is a growing recognition that online teaching and learning is an increasingly important catalyst for universities to adapt and thrive amidst this uncertainty and disruption caused by global trends in the long term and the pandemic in the short term. As a result of Covid-19, providing online teaching and learning services in Africa must be a core focus of all leaders across the education spectrum, striving to attain full capacity for continued operation.

Indeed, a number of efforts have been made towards the transformation of higher education in Africa through integration of digital technologies. So far, these efforts have not realized the transformation that is required to fully operate in the circumstances resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. As we discuss aligning universities services to accelerate attainment of continental aspirations, this session will focus mainly on learning from each other how to harness digital technologies for online teaching and learning as a way to recover from the Covid-19 crisis and to provide the resilience needed to move our universities forward. For more effectiveness and impact, we recognise the need for wider university transformation as learning institutions to champion change and inclusive development.

It has been argued that for digital technologies to cause a significant transformation in higher education, approaches to their implementation must be given sufficient attention involving a level of change in practice. This should normally include understanding the relationships between digital technologies, knowledge and change processes.

Developing the kind of outputs in terms of graduates and citizens required in an information era, higher education players in Africa must therefore understand what kind of skills and knowledge can be delivered using which technology. To arrive at a consensus on the optimal approach of improving educational outcomes and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, requires contributions from leaders and expertise from different fields. This is why this high level dialogue focuses on experience sharing. Leaders who have made steps towards implementing digital technologies for teaching and learning will be featured, as well as technology and education experts who are in position to advise on the best approach to be adopted if tangible outputs and long lasting outcomes are to be achieved.

How can we galvanize efforts towards online teaching and learning in universities in Africa? This remains an important and a relevant question, and one which requires in-depth analysis of the affordances of modern digital technologies, what pedagogical approaches must be adopted and what knowledge and skills are required in order to facilitate the transition to online teaching and learning to ensure the survival of higher education in Africa in the face of

Covid-19.

Purpose of Side Event: To provide a platform to discuss the advances and opportunities of integration of digital technologies, especially in terms of teaching and learning. The session will also explore successes and challenges universities recorded in implementing online teaching and learning. This will form the basis for lesson learning and experience sharing across the continent and outside the continent. Specifically, the session will address the following objectives:

1. Establish what digital technologies are currently influencing universities in Africa
2. Discuss the ways in which digital technologies can be integrated into university system in Africa
3. Outline the opportunities and challenges in implementing online teaching and learning particularly in universities in Africa, and globally
4. Explore the skills and competences required for leadership, staff and students to enable universities and other sectors integrate use of digital technologies
5. Examine the policies and other reforms needed to facilitate effective online teaching and learning in African universities.

Session contributions:

Moderators:

Session 1: Moderator: Prof. Victoria Wambui Ngumi, Vice Chancellor, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), Kenya

Session 2: Moderator: Mr. Rafiq EL HALAMI, Mohamed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P), Morocco

The moderators will introduce the topics for the sessions, outlining the aim and objectives of each session. They will also introduce each of the panelists in their respective session who will discuss based on the suggested sub-themes.

Lead speakers:

Session 1 Lead Speaker: Prof Barnabas Nawangwe, Vice Chancellor Makerere University, Uganda

Session 2 Lead Speaker: Prof Francis Petersen, Vice Chancellor & Principal, University of Free State, Southern Africa

Lead Speakers will make presentations on the session topics, highlighting how universities in

Africa can harness digital potential to drive their transformation. Specific suggestion is indicated in the session summary below

Participants: University senior Management, Units leading digital technology

Panel Speakers:

Session 1 Speakers (15:00-16:30)

1. Prof. Adipala Ekwamu, Executive Secretary, RUFORUM
2. Prof Address Malata, Vice Chancellor, Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST), Malawi
3. HE Hon. Prof. Dr. Eleonore Ladekan Yayi, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Benin
4. Hon Prof Amon Murwira, Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development, Zimbabwe

Session 2 (16:40-19:00)

1. Dr. Tony Frank, Chancellor of the Colorado State University System, USA
2. Prof Arturo Condo, Rector, EARTH University, Costa Rica
3. Prof Tawana Kupe, Vice Chancellor and Principal, University of Pretoria, South Africa
4. Prof Theresia Akenji, Vice Chancellor, University of Bamenda, Cameroon

Plenary discussions:

This is a Q&A for each session with the audience during which participants in the audience will be allowed to ask questions or make comments on issues within the scope of the session themes.

Rapporteur:

Dr. Alice Mutiti Mweetwa, Deputy Executive Secretary, RUFORUM

The rapporteur will work with the moderators to capture key points/recommendations for inclusion in the report of the two sessions.

Mode of session contributions:

The four hour-sessions will be kick-started by the lead speaker, followed by panel discussion. The lead speaker may choose to use a power point presentation (for 15 minutes). Each of the

panel speakers will be given 15 minutes in which to contribute to the dialogue (with or without a PowerPoint presentation).

The 15-minute discussions by the panel speakers will be based on the main session theme, guided by the 'proposed sub-themes' below. Participants are expected to benefit from the panelist through clear take away messages, which will be summarized by the moderator and compiled in a report by the session rapporteurs. Following the 15-minute contributions by the panelists, the moderator may choose to pursue a discussion in form of a follow-up question per speaker (5 minutes) or will request the audience to direct their questions directly to the panelists.

Proposed sub-themes for discussion:

The following are the five proposed sub-themes with questions for discussion in this session:

1. **Sub-theme 1** (Digital technology landscape): What is the digital technology landscape in universities in Africa? What lessons exist in regard to the digital divide and advancement of digital era in Africa?
2. **Sub-theme 2** (Digital transformation drivers): How can integration of digital technologies be effected in African universities?
3. **Sub-theme 3** (Digital content, tools and platforms for online teaching and learning): What are the key considerations for creation and sharing of quality content across African universities? In addition, how best do we link with knowledge centres in the area of online teaching and learning for greater reach and impact?
4. **Sub-theme 4** (Skills, pedagogy and competencies): What key digital skills and competencies do staff and students need to effectively participate in and benefit from online teaching and learning? We could explore issues related to assessment and quality assurance issues of online programmes.
5. **Sub-theme 5** (Digital policies): This will explore issues related to National and institutional digital related policies, strategies and reforms needed to cause level of change in practice in universities in Africa. What would be the needed actions from university leaders and policy-makers?

Summary of the session

Rapporteur: Dr. Alice Mutiti Mweetwa, Deputy Executive Secretary, RUFORUM

Time	Agenda item	Responsible party
Session One: Policies and Institutional Frameworks for Integration of Digital Technologies in online teaching and learning.		
Session Moderator: Prof. Victoria Wambui Ngumi , Vice Chancellor, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya		
15:00 -16:30	Welcome remarks and setting the scene	Prof. Adipala Ekwamu , Executive Secretary, RUFORUM
	<p>Lead Speaker: How can integration of digital technologies be effected in African universities' systems to cause meaningful impact?</p> <p>What are some of the key challenges universities have recorded in mainstreaming online teaching and learning in the Higher Education System in Africa?</p>	Prof Barnabas Nawangwe , Vice Chancellor Makerere University, Uganda
	<p>Panel Speaker 1: What are some of the key challenges in realigning learning contents for effective online delivery?</p> <p>What are some of the key digital skills and competencies leaders, staff and students need to effectively participate in and benefit from online teaching and learning?</p> <p>How best to link African universities with knowledge centers in the area of online teaching and learning for greater reach and impact?</p>	Prof Address Malata , Vice Chancellor, Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST), Malawi
	<p>Panel Speaker 2: What are some of the needed national and institutional digital policies, strategies and reforms to achieve wide scale integration of online teaching and learning in universities and tertiary institutions in Africa?</p> <p>What are some of the lessons learnt with regards to the digital divide and advancement of digital era?</p>	Hon. Prof. Dr. Eleonore Ladekan Yayi , Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Benin

	Panel speaker 3: What are the needed actions from university leaders and policy-makers for effective integration of digital technologies in university education system in Africa? What have been some of the experiences and lessons from Zimbabwe?	Hon Prof Amon Murwira , Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development
	Participants’ reactions to the session speakers	All
	Concluding remarks by the Session Speakers and Moderator	Panelists and Session Moderator
16:30-16:40	Health Break & Interlude	
Session Two: Advances and opportunities for integration of digital technologies in university education systems		
Session Moderator: Mr. Rafiq EL HALAMI, Mohamed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P), Morocco		
16:40-19:00	Lead Speaker: Digital technology landscape in universities in Africa: Exploring advances and opportunities of integration of digital technologies in service delivery, especially in university education system	Prof Francis Petersen , Vice Chancellor and Principal, University of Free State, South Africa
	Panel Speaker 1: What have been some of the experiences in the USA and Colorado State University in particular, in terms of integrating online teaching and learning? How has your university dealt with the issue of inclusivity in online learning? What institutional frameworks need to be put in place to foster integration of online teaching and learning in university processes? What are the opportunities for partnership with African universities?	Dr. Tony Frank , Chancellor of the Colorado State University System, USA
	Panel Speaker 2: What have been some of the experiences in Latin America and EARTH University in particular, in terms of integrating online teaching and learning? How has your university dealt with the issue of inclusivity in online learning?	Prof Arturo Condo , Rector, EARTH University, Costa Rica

	What possibilities exist for joint creation and sharing of education resources with African education institutions?	
	<p>Panel Speaker 3: How are universities in South Africa dealing with the issue of integrating online teaching and learning? How has the University of Pretoria dealt with the issues of inclusivity, development of online contents, and retooling of students and staff (including issues of assessment and quality assurance of online programmes)?</p> <p>How has the university of Pretoria, staff and students handled the issues of research amidst the COVID-19 pandemic?</p>	Prof Tawana Kupe , Vice Chancellor and Principal, University of Pretoria, South Africa
	<p>Panel speaker 4: What is the digital technology landscape in universities in Africa? What have the universities in Cameroon done to address the digital divide?</p>	Prof Theresia Akenji , Vice Chancellor, University of Bamenda, Cameroon
	Participants' reactions to the Session Speakers	ALL
	Final comments from Session Speakers and Moderator	Panelists and Moderator
	Final remarks by RUFORUM Executive Secretary	Prof Adipala Ekwamu

Expected take away messages:

1. Key digital technology trends influencing higher education in Africa and the broader digitalization issues including inclusivity
2. Digital footprint in African universities
3. How to succeed with online teaching and learning in universities in Africa
4. Required competences for leaders, staff and students in the information age
5. How to work with policy leaders and global knowledge hubs to achieve digital transformation in African universities