RUFORUM Webinar Series (2020)

Introductory Note for Webinar 12

Date: 30th September 2020

Time: 15.00-17.30 East African Standard Time

Students connecting globally to visualise and re-engineer universities for a better world post COVID-19

Creating high performance and change leaders has become central in today's competitive world[1]. Graduates ought to be proactive, active and engaging with exceptional abilities to manage rapidly evolving times and highly demanding contexts. As the world continues to shrink in space and time owing to globalisation and the new age of the internet of things, connecting students with other students from across the world to share, learn and collaborate to co-create innovations and solutions to global, regional, national and local problems has become critical and immensely possible. The current COVID-19 pandemic situation that has brought education activities across the world to a near-halt offers a new opportunity to reimagine international partnerships as well as bring a stronger co-creation, co-innovation and co-learning action among students from across the world to respond to the challenges paused by the pandemic.

Higher education learning institutions and universities remain an important locus for inspiring and facilitating the contribution young people to society for example, through technology innovation and activism in information dissemination. Students at various levels within the university, research and other learning institutions are central to the research ecosystem that is critical in knowledge and innovation production required to solve problems and support evidence-based policy making. In the current COVID-19 situation, young energies are being put to use, the young people are out there across the world and Africa inclusive working hard to provide solutions to help reduce the spread of the virus, and address the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. They are thus representing the energy, creativity and innovation required by communities in the time of crisis[2].

Action is being driven at various levels; through individual acts and through collective action, the immense power within the youth is transformative in mobilizing against the pandemic. The youth-led civil society and movements are acting on an unprecedented scale[3]. Youth are mobilizing communities to protect themselves, and supporting governments and health workers. These energies and innovativeness is required in visualizing and re-imagining the

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[1] https://managementstudyguide.com/transformational-leadership.htm

[2] Obonyo, R. 2020. Youth key in fight against coronavirus. https://blogs.worldbank.org/youth-transforming-africa/youth-key-fight-against-coronavirus

[3] Restless Development, 2020. Youth Power to help end the coronavirus pandemic. https://restlessdevelopment.org/youth-power-to-help-end-coronavirus-pandemic

universities and higher education institutions in particular support building resilient learning institutions. Discourse on the need to re-imagine higher education is not a new event that can solely be attributed to the shock that COVID-19 pandemic has caused on learning and functioning of higher education institutions. For some time now, the global community has been dissatisfied with the higher education outcomes and calling for rethink of the purpose and processes of higher education.

The COVID-19 pandemic is providing an opportunity for students to question the higher education system as it were prior to COVID-19 but importantly offer a visualization and help to re-engineer higher education institutions that respond to the present crisis with capacity to appropriately deal with the future dimensions. In this regard, three important gaps have been identified as those that seek to be addressed in visualizing and re-engineering universities per se; the access gap, the quality gap, and the readiness gap. We add the fourth gap to include the flexibility gap. Ideally, the access, seeks a discourse on who gets access to learning experiences, what type and what type of classroom today and/or tomorrow will be relevant for effective learning (e.g. agile classroom[4]). The quality gap, considers the re-think of the relevance and effectiveness of the learning experiences provided and whether learning experiences are relevant in addressing the present grand challenges. The readiness gap addresses the capability of candidates/students to suit the career opportunities and how universities can better coordinate the supply of ready candidates to the labour market. Meanwhile, the flexibility gap considers the ability of universities and learning institutions to rapidly modify their processes in the face of a crisis, does it matter where learning takes place and how the universities can become leaders and providers of solutions to unimagined problems in society.

This proposed webinar brings together students from across the world to visualize and re-engineer universities for a better world in the post COVID-19. The students will address a number of issues including: how COVID-19 has affected various parts of the world, changed their education experiences, how universities have responded and their experiences on virtual learning. The students will thereafter seek for consensus on how they can contribute to re-engineering universities in various parts of the world and build a movement of student actors in this direction.

Webinar 12:	Panelists:	1. How have you been affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic and other related crises? What key aspects of your studies have been affected?
Students connecting globally to visualise and re-engineer universties for a better world post COVID-19	1. **Mr Medard Kafoutchoni**, PhD student, University of Abomey Calavi, Cotonou - Benin 2. **Mrs Chizoba Obianuju**	2. How do you think the

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[4] Checa, M.C. 2017. Reimagining job-oriented education to give youth the chance of a better future. https://medium.com/laboratoria/reimagining-job-oriented-education-to-give-youth-the-chance-of-a-better-future-260c63d3b705

Moderator: **Ms. Irene Akite**, PhD Student, Gulu University, Gulu-Uganda **Guest Speaker:** **HE Professor Mrs Ameenah Gurib-Fakim** Former President, Government of Mauritius, Reduit-Mauritius **Discussant**: **Professor Teresa Akenga**, Vice Chancellor, University of Eldoret, Eldoret-Kenya **Date:** 30 September 2020 **Time:** 1500-1730 East African Standard time	**Oranu**, PhD student at Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Lilongwe-Malawi **3. Ms Sophie Galema**, PhD student, Wageningen University and Research (WUR), Netherlands **4. Ms Carmen Maria de Leone**, Fourth Year Student at EARTH University, Costa Rica **5. Ms Wu Yumeng**, Undergraduate Student, North West Agriculture and Forest University, Shaanxi Province - China **6. Ms. Nour Hammad**, PhD Student, American University of Beirut, Beirut-Lebanon	Pandemic has changed your own, and your colleagues education with respect to study, internship and research over the next three years? 3. How has your university responded to the crises and student needs? 4. What has been your experience so far with virtual and distant learning? 5. What do you think the future of Higher education will be and how do you think your univerity, country and continent should invest and prepare for a different and rapidly changing world? How do you think universties should offer undergraduate and postgraduate training? 6. In light of your experience during the COVID-19 pandemic, what key actions should be undertaken to improve the student learning and training? Who should undertake these actions? 7. What other initiatives should be undertaken to promote equality and inclusiveness to enhance access to education in your country? 8. What can students do to stay in touch with global peers and do you think that you could establish a

		series of exchanges with students across the globe on strengthening your universities to be more sustainable and equitable?

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