

Framing Transformation of Higher Education for Africa's Competitiveness

Ideas Note for an Online Webinar Slate for 28th April, 2023; 16:00 HRS (EAT)

Webinar Link: <https://bit.ly/3Me6s5j>

Introduction

Most African countries have celebrated their 50th independence following the handover of public administration to new African republics and kingdoms. The new African nations then inherited a legacy of assets and liabilities of their colonial past; a major asset being the higher education system. The higher education system was however a functional liability, having been created to fill human resource and management capacity gaps of the colonial governments¹. In the last 50 years, the continent has received competent graduates from this higher education system who continue past legacies of “fitting in place” to make things work and function better rather than develop innovations that change the quality balance sheet of society and create new value. Conversely, the global north had created their higher education centers as knowledge centers that create and promote values, identity and tackle the biggest issues facing society². They are in fact the sources of ideology and innovations that frame and guide their society's development trajectory

As Africa grapples with the need to grow its economy faster and sustainably to meet contemporary needs and exploit emergent and future opportunities across political, social and economic domains, there is immense challenge on the universities to offer solutions and guidance for shaping the continent's future. Africa is the world's youngest continent and according to the African Development Bank (AfDB)³, of its nearly 420 million youth aged 15-35, one-third are unemployed, another third are vulnerably employed, and only one in six is in wage employment. By 2025, 263 million young African's people will lack an economic stake in the system by 2025 because, while 10 to 12 million African youth enter the workforce annually, only 3.1 million jobs are created.

Thus, African society is expecting more from the universities by the day, to address the jobs crisis and contribute to moving millions out of poverty, where nearly 40% (about two thirds of the global poor) live in sub-Saharan Africa⁴. However, if higher education institutions are to make a significant leap in repurposing their missions for increased relevance, there is an urgent need to reframe the place of universities and the kind of transformation(s) that must happen. In doing so, it is important to note that African universities start addressing these challenges and leveraging on the opportunity amidst a number of constraints that already afflict them including among others;

¹ Phaedra Haringsma, 2021. Universities and the legacy of colonial epistemicide. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210908100721929>

² European Universities initiative. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative>

³ https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Images/high_5s/Job_youth_Africa_Job_youth_Africa.pdf

⁴ Marta Schoch and Christoph Lakner, 2020. The number of poor people continues to rise in Sub-Saharan Africa, despite a slow decline in the poverty rate. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/number-poor-people-continues-rise-sub-saharan-africa-despite-slow-decline-poverty-rate>

limited resources, skills flight and staffing shortages, limited institutional independence, ill-suited curricula, deterioration of research quality and teaching⁵. The recent COVID-19 disruptions created some level of confidence in African higher education institutions as they stepped up to provide level of relief and solutions amidst global shortages, perhaps a trend that ought to be deepened. This shows that African University is steadily getting robust to meet emerging development needs of the continent and the world economy. Indeed the contribution of Africa to global knowledge while still low has steadily grown over the year

The purpose of this online facilitated webinar is to discuss the key imperatives and draw lessons from past and on-going initiatives on transformation of higher education for Africa's competitiveness. Specifically, the webinar will be guided by three discussion areas; (1) transforming higher education from evidence for action; (2) building blocks for transforming higher education providing evidence for disrupting the status quo; and (3) piloting transformation from a shared vision between emerging and established African universities.

Program

Time	Theme/issues of discussion	Speaker
15:45-16:00	Log-in and TAGDev video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5j8CB9_4Fk	Nada
16:00-16:05	House-keeping issues and setting the scene	Moderator
16:05-16:10	Welcome remarks from RUFORUM Executive Secretary	Prof. Patrick Okori, Executive Secretary, RUFORUM
16:10-16:15	Welcome remarks from the RUFORUM Board Chair	Prof. Theresia Nkuo-Akenji, RUFORUM Board Chair and Vice Chancellor, University of Bamenda, Cameroon
16:15-16:25	Official opening address	Cameroon
16:25-16:40	Key Note Address: Framing transformation of higher Education for Africa's Competitiveness	Dr. Beatrice Muganda Inyangala, Principal Secretary, Department of Higher Education and Research, Government of Kenya
16:40-17:15	Panel 1. Transforming Higher Education: Evidence for Action 2. Building blocks for transforming higher education: Evidence disrupting status quo	Prof. Gaspar Banyankimbona, Executive Secretary, Inter-University Council for East Africa Ranjit Majumdar, Executive Director, Global Leaders Consulting

⁵ Trust Africa, 2021. Strengthening and Transforming Higher Education in Africa.
<https://nru.uncst.go.ug/xmlui/handle/123456789/1093>

	3. Piloting transformation: Shared vision between emerging and established Universities	Prof. Duncan Ongeng, Gulu University, Prof. Nancy Mungai, Egerton University; TAGDev Program Coordinators
17:15-17:30	Open Dialogue	Audience

Contact

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