



02<sup>ND</sup> RUFORUM  
Triennial Conference  
12-16 August 2024  
Namibia



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## 2<sup>nd</sup> RUFORUM TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE

### CONCEPT NOTE

## Seeds of Change: Unveiling the Africa's Problem-Based Learning Network for enhanced quality and relevance of higher agriculture education in Africa

**Date:** Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2024

**Venue:** Room KUISEB 3, Mercure Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia

**Online participants register here:** <https://bit.ly/3YuFah6>

**Time:** 14:00 – 16:30 Central African Time

**Contact:** Prof. Anthony Egeru ([a.egeru@ruforum.org](mailto:a.egeru@ruforum.org))

### Introduction

Africa's socio-economic landscape is highly diverse, with significant disparities between urban and rural areas. Moving people out of poverty and spurring economic growth in such a socio-economically diverse society requires developing tailor-made solutions adapted to the needs and challenges of the society. This applies to society specific and overarching challenges such as food insecurity, poverty reduction, youth unemployment/underemployment, economic growth among others. Human resources with capacity to diagnose community challenges and innovate solutions to address these challenges. Universities as powerhouses for human resources production should integrate innovative methodologies to produce this calibre of human resources. Moreover, such human resources should have the capacity to deploy science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship in addressing the societal challenges and drive social progress, create jobs and spur economic growth.

Problem Based Learning (PBL) presents an innovative approach that pushes higher education institutions to facilitate learning to address context specific challenges. It is an instructional approach where students acquire knowledge and skills by dedicating an extended period to exploring and addressing a real-world, engaging, and complex challenges. This method moves away from traditional lecture-based teaching to a more interactive, student-centred experience. Consequently, students develop a deep understanding of the content while enhancing their critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication and problem-solving abilities. These skills are highly valued in the workplace and prepare students for their future careers. Moreover, PBL bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical





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application, ensuring that students can apply what they learn in real-world scenarios and contribute effectively to address the societal challenges of local communities.

PBL also addresses the issue of disconnect between academic institutions and the needs of the local industries by creating strong linkages between academia and industry, aligning educational outcomes with market needs, and ensuring that graduates have the skills and knowledge that are directly applicable to the workforce. PBL therefore offers a transformative approach to higher education that aligns closely with the unique challenges and opportunities in Africa. Integrating PBL into the curriculum requires careful planning to align projects with learning outcomes and the expected effort by students. Teachers play a crucial role as mentors and guides throughout the learning process and might need training and support to effectively facilitate PBL. Assessment methods need to be adapted to evaluate both the process and the final product of the students' projects. Students apply theoretical knowledge to practical scenarios, enhancing their understanding and retention. They take an active role in their learning process, making decisions about their projects and developing communication skills and the ability to work effectively in multidisciplinary teams.

Recognising the unique value that PBL plays in transforming education, the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), a network of 170 universities in 40 African countries partnered with universities in Europe to deploy PBL in delivering agriculture and related sciences training. The two projects; PBL Bio-Africa funded by Finish Ministry of Higher Education, and ABC-BlendED funded by Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education piloted the deployment of PBL at African universities. The two pilot projects implemented in 10 universities from 5 African countries have yielded great results including practical solutions addressing private companies' challenges, created new enterprises, and solutions that address rural communities' challenges. Sustaining such achievements and taking them to scale across the other 160 member universities in 35 African countries is paramount to transform Africa's social and economic society. One of the approaches identified to bring the PBL approach to scale across the RUFORUM Network is the creation of a Community of Practice named "PBL Africa Network". The PBL Africa Network provides a platform for RUFORUM and other African universities to enhance the capacity of human capital they produce to develop context specific knowledge, technologies, innovations and enterprises that address Africa's social challenges and drive economic growth.

### Objectives of PBL Africa Network

The PBL Africa Network aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

- a) Raise awareness of the features and benefits of PBL for higher education.



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- b) Stimulate synergies among academics, students and industry stakeholders to share knowledge, resources, good practices and trigger research and innovation in the field of PBL.
- c) Promote innovation by encouraging the development and implementation of innovative practices and technologies tailored to the diverse ecological and socio-economic contexts of Africa.
- d) Nurture students' employability to increase employment opportunities for Africa's growing youth population.
- e) Mainstream the adoption of PBL in higher education in Africa.

The PBL Africa Network will be launched during the 2<sup>nd</sup> RUFORUM Triennial Conference in Windhoek, Namibia. Specifically, the launch will take place on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2024 at Room KUISEB 3 of Mercure Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia.

#### The objectives of the PBL Africa Network launch are:

- a) Present the tenets of PBL and its approaches for successful deployment in higher education institutions.
- b) Share success stories, challenge and opportunities for deploying PBL in African and European higher education institutions, and
- c) Constitute and launch the PBL Africa Network to facilitate lesson sharing and scaling out PBL across African Universities

#### Event Approach

Presentations will be made on the experiences of two projects that deployed PBL in African and European Universities. Experiences and lessons from the deployment of PBL in African universities context will be shared by Gulu University, Uganda and Egerton University, Kenya. Physically and virtually present participants will be able to ask questions for clarification. During the plenary discussions, other participants will also share their own experiences in deploying PBL and institutional structures that enable PBL at university level. The structure and function of the proposed PBL network and the coordination mechanisms across the five regions of Africa where RUFORUM is operating will be discussed and representatives from each region nominated. The roadmap and work plan for the nominated representatives will be jointly developed and mechanisms for keeping the PBL network vibrant will be agreed upon.

#### Date and Venue

The event will take place on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2024, physically in Room KUISEB 3, Mercure Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia and virtually here: <https://bit.ly/3YuFah6> from 14:00 – 16:30 Central African Time.



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### Expected outcomes

- Experiences and lessons learnt in deploying PBL as a tool for enhancing quality of human capital to drive Africa’s social transformation and economic growth;
- Nominating the PBL Africa Network Installation Committee, a group of 4/5 persons interested in setting up the PBL African Network.
- A preliminary work plan for the implementation of the African Network of PBL until the coming RUFORUM AGM.
- A draft of a position paper to be further developed and submitted to African authorities to support the African Network of PBL; ideally with the patronage of RUFORUM and national authorities on higher education (Namibia and other Ministers of Higher Education)

### Participants

Participants will include university graduate students, professors and other academic staff, Principals and Deans and other university managers, development partners, policy makers and Government Officials, industry representatives, Non-Profit Organizations and other professionals in the agriculture sector

### Programme

Session Chair:

Rapporteur (s):

Duration	Activity	Responsible institution
14:00 – 14:10	Arrival and registration	RUFORUM Secretariat
14:10 – 14:20	Opening remarks	Prof. Patrick Kyamanya, Vice Chancellor Uganda Martyrs University
14:20 – 14:40	Advancing the quality of teaching and learning between European and African universities: the Case of PBL BioAfrica Initiative <b>Question and Answer Session</b>	Eijah Letinen, HAMK, Finland
14:40 – 15:00	Global Learning, Local Impact: Exploring Blended Mobility and PBL <b>Question and Answer Session</b>	Nuno Escudeiro, Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal
15:00 – 15:30	<b>Experiences from African universities deploying BPL</b> a) Adapting and translating challenge-based training and learning for community development: experiences from university interventions in post-conflict northern Uganda.	Duncan Ongeng, Gulu University





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	b) Realigning university processes, practices and systems to advance challenge-based learning: evidence from Egerton University	Patience Mshenga, Egerton University
15:30 – 15:50	PBL Africa Network for advancing teaching and learning quality in tertiary and higher education institutions	Eijah and Nuno
15:50 – 16:20	Open discussions on the roles, operational structure and sustainability of the PBL Africa Network	Moderator
16:20 – 16:30	Closing	Prof. Anthony Egeru

Co-organized by:

