



The Fifth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2016

Transformative Curriculum Development and Leadership in Higher Agricultural Education in Africa

A refresher workshop for RUFORUM Principals and Deans

Concept Note

Background

Universities worldwide thrive best as innovation centres with a dynamic feedback loops including both forward and backward mechanisms. These have facilitated universities dominance as knowledge empires providing a range of solutions. Universities that have excelled in meeting society needs and have been able to actively participate in national and regional level transformations have demonstrated the use of highly innovative curriculum as well as unique curriculum leadership. Several universities in Africa have faculties of agriculture with some having been training graduates over the last 50 years. Proliferation of private universities in Africa in the last 20 years has fundamentally increased the intake and number of graduates coming out of these universities. However, on a number of occasions, discourse is awash with criticism of poorly trained and ill prepared graduates with inability to transform the agricultural sector in Africa. A thorough re-examination of curricular and curriculum leadership in African universities to revisit the perspectives of tertiary agricultural education is of urgent interest to strategically respond to the century old agricultural challenges that still riddle African farmers.

A resounding need to increase agricultural productivity, energy and fiber to meet the rapidly rising African population is more than apparent today than ever before. This is because by 2050 Africa’s population would have surpassed 2 billion people. Slow progress in agriculture due to low technological and human capacity development are issues that can partly be addressed by innovative curricular and curriculum leadership within an aspiring Africa. Addressing the myriad of challenges including among others; climate change impacts, land degradation, increased pests and diseases, population growth, and poor investment policies calls for a

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dynamic and highly skilled workforce within agriculture and associated sectors that facilitate the development of agricultural commodity value chains as well as economy wide sector growth. The paradigm shift required in the way agricultural research, training, commercialization, and extension is practiced and managed across the continent is not that is based on a 'copy and paste' but a thoroughly thought out process that helps to actualize the African dream espoused in the African Union Agenda 2063 as well as severally well written regional and national policy and development plans.

Developing a coherent understanding and mechanism to agricultural development in Africa has been at centre of various government and development partners. Over the last decade, various continent-wide policy frameworks have been developed to provide strategic directions for developing agriculture and securing Africa's food security. The Science Agenda for Africa (S3A) provides a broader framework for enhancing the contribution of science and technology to addressing the needs and opportunities in Africa's agriculture. The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) provides the policy framework for investments and policy action for agriculture at Continental level. The Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa -2024 (STISA-2024) as a continental framework, outlines the mechanism for accelerating Africa's transition to an innovation-led, knowledge-based economy within the overall framework of the African Union Agenda 2063 with Priority Area 1 of STISA 2024 dedicated to Food Security and poverty reduction. All these frameworks are well articulated but require skilled human resources to practically translate these thoughts into realities with African farmers. Besides limited skilled human resources to drive the process, limited financial resources and weak governance systems in many African countries further constrain the implementation of the said frameworks. Addressing how human resource capacities development is undertaken in Africa forms one of the key fundamental actions towards operationalizing the frameworks that seek to leapfrog Africa's agricultural sector. Universities are at centre of this transformation and they themselves need to transform so as to better influence paradigm shift in educational value chains as well as in various agricultural commodity value chains in Africa.

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Institutional strengthening for effective human capacity development in Africa is usually a complex process because African universities have multiple stakeholders with divergent interests. Governments often see them as extensions of state apparatus to serve sitting regimes, their progress is dependent on good relations with government than strategic national interests and policy directives. Accordingly, reform in universities has thus tended to perpetuate ‘islands of success’ where a few faculties of interest have moved faster than others within the same university. The Faculties of Agriculture in many African universities are focus faculties due to their connection to agriculture that forms a backbone of many African economies. In this regard, they have tended to champion institutional transformation but are not yet at the level of comfort and position of influence to cause actual transformation in agriculture. The Principals and/or Deans of African Colleges/Faculties of Agriculture are the center of steering agricultural teaching, research and outreach at African universities and are therefore better placed to influence the transformation processes occurring within faculty and students. Repositioning, this crop of leaders to new dimensions of curriculum development and leadership including, among others, organization, implementation and supervision and research in their respective institutions provides a win-win situation that can potentially deliver on the desired transformative tertiary agricultural education in Africa.

It is based the above appreciation of issues that the proposed training seeks to undertake a one day training of the about 66 African Principals and Deans drawn from the 60 RUFORUM Network member universities in 25 African countries. The training is envisaged as a refresher workshop aiming to broaden and deepen the Principals and Deans capacities to implement transformative curriculum development and leadership in African universities so as to better convert the unprecedented opportunities in Africa into great wealth and permanent improvement of people’s lives and livelihoods.

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Workshop Objectives

This workshop is driven by the desire to support African universities to undertake transformative reform in the manner in which tertiary agricultural education training, research and outreach is being conducted. The specific objectives of the workshop include:

- I. Review curriculum implementation challenges in the agricultural sector in Africa
- II. Develop strategies for effective agricultural curricula implementation in Africa
- III. Develop a collaborative framework for feedback in curriculum implementation in the RUFORUM Network

Approach and Methodology

The refresher training will be organized as a one day side event during the RUFORUM Biennial Conference in South Africa by RUFORUM with facilitation of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Governance. The refresher training will be attended by the RUFORUM Principals and Deans and will engage in a participatory manner, the participants to jointly develop and map out an implementation approach for effective curriculum leadership in Africa. Short background presentations on concepts of and experiences on curriculum leadership will be presented. The participants will then share experiences and develop strategies for effectively developing and implement agricultural curricula for the sector's transformation.

Expected Outputs

Synthesis Report of the meeting outlining;

- 1) Agricultural development and implementation challenges in Africa
- 2) Strategies for effective implementation of agricultural curricula
- 3) A collaboration framework for lesson sharing in curriculum development and implementation

Venue and Participants

Venue: Century City Conference Centre, Hall B

Date & Time: Saturday 15th October 2016 from 0830-1730

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**Side Event Organizers
and Contact**

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