



The Fifth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2016

Reflections and Dialogue on Uganda's Higher Education System A meeting between Uganda Vice Chancellors and the Minister of Higher Education, Uganda

Concept Note

Background

Like in many other African countries, the higher education sector in Uganda is undergoing major transformation to cope with increasing demand and attempts to re-align the sector to be more responsive to national development agenda in Uganda. Uganda's overall strategy is guided by the recently developed and approved National Development Plan (2015-2020). The NDP aims to Strengthen Uganda's Competitiveness for Sustainable Wealth Creation, Employment and Inclusive Growth. More broadly, Uganda Vision 2040 highlights overall targets for the country's long term development. Education, and more specifically higher education is seen as a central pillar to the realization of Uganda's Vision 2040 in a knowledge economy. Further, emerging trends such as globalization, urbanization, liberalization and climate change all will require continual refocus of the higher education sector to ensure that it churns out relevant products (human resource, knowledge generation, service to community) to Uganda's context in the society.

Uganda's higher education sub-sector has expanded massively over the last two decades with regards to numbers and diversity of institutions, student enrollment and also the number of accredited programs. From one public university, Uganda today has 37 universities most of which are private (30 of the 37 universities are private). The growth in private universities has required that the government's role in the higher education sector is broadened and more emphasis placed on policy support and quality assurance. Similarly, student numbers (enrollment) expanded significantly by 24% from 201,376 in 2013 to 249,049 in 2014. The high increase is attributed to policies that call for liberalization of the

Page 1 of 4

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sector, expansion of access to equitable and quality Education at all levels, as well as enhanced efficiency and effectiveness in Higher education service delivery. Universal Primary Education (UPE) and University Secondary Education (USE) policies ensure an expanding pipeline for universities to accommodate and educate.

Recognizing the challenge, the Uganda Government continues to invest in the higher education sector to enhance higher education delivery in the country. One such initiative, is the African Higher Education Centers of Excellence (ACE) Phase 2 Project which is coordinated by the World Bank together with the Interuniversity Council for East Africa. The Project aims to support the selected Eastern and Southern African higher education institutions to deliver quality post-graduate education and build collaborative research capacity in the regional priority areas. A total of 24 project were selected in the region with four within Uganda. The project will respond to gaps in number of skilled professionals with specialized knowledge who can innovate and boost productivity in key areas related to Industry, agriculture, health, education and applied statistics. The ACE II Project responds at micro level to an important challenge and highlights an important need to engage in projects that enhance Uganda's regional leadership in higher education, as it was in the 60's. How to expand the ACE model to support growth in the sector is an issue that requires further deliberation.

Similarly, the growth in universities from 1 to 37 has, unfortunately, not been followed by a similar increase in the number of qualified professionals to staff the universities. As such, universities have a shortages of PhD qualified staff. Currently, many institutions are operation at less than 50% of the staff establishment, which has important ramifications on the delivery of education and research output. At that same time, a number of staff are retiring, further reducing available staff capacity. Urgent efforts need to be put in place to enhance staff capacity while ensuring a longer term plan for ensuring a pipeline of professionals for the institutions.

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Purpose and Rationale of the Side Event

Management of higher education institutions is a challenging task, as it requires a firm grip on enhanced knowledge generation through creation of postgraduate and related research programs, improving content and delivery of knowledge and enhancing impact on communities, while at the same time handling large institutions with often inadequate funding. There is thus need to define platforms for continuous engagement between university leaders and education policy makers in Uganda to enhance sharing of lessons across University vice chancellors, but also with the Ministry of Education at the highest level through the Minister responsible for Higher Education.

The Fifth RUFORUM Biennial Conference and Higher Education Week will be held in Cape Town from 14-22 October, 2016. The meeting will bring together key higher education stakeholders including graduate students, vice chancellors, policy makers, private sector practitioners and Non-governmental organizations among others. The aim of the meeting is to provide a platform for dialogue across multi-stakeholder groups with objective to improve higher education in Africa by responding to key challenges and learning from northern and other partners. At this year's (October, 2016) meeting, there will be a large group of Ugandan vice chancellors attending, as will be policy makers from Uganda. It thus provides an opportunity for engagement for discussion on issue pertinent to Uganda's higher education.

Objectives of the side Event

The overall aim of the side meeting at the RUFORUM Biennial is to provide a platform for dialogue between Vice Chancellors of Ugandan public and private universities to discuss higher education issues and engage with Uganda's Minister responsible for Higher Education.

Approach and Methodology

A two hour meeting will be organized at the RUFORUM Biennial Conference as a side event. The Minister for Higher Education, Uganda will meet with Uganda Vice Chancellors of Public and Private universities to dialogue on higher education issues relevant for Uganda. The meeting will be largely informal and will begin by a Statement from the Minister of Higher Education and subsequently, opportunity for the Vice Chancellors

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to update the Minister on their university operations, including key successes, challenges and issues. A briefing on efforts being made to respond to the Uganda Secretary to Treasury for Project proposals to advance selected efforts in the higher education sector will be presented for discussion. The meeting will be closed by a statement from the Minister of Higher Education.

Venue and Participants

Venue: Century City Conference Centre, Meeting Room 2

Date & Time: 19th October 2016 from 1430-1630hrs.

Side Event Organizers and Contact

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)

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