

25 September 2019

PLENARY SESSIONS III: INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT (For ACE IMPACT)

The objective of the 3rd Plenary Session on institutional impact for ACE Impact centres was to stimulate institutional engagement on Disbursement Linked Indicator 7 which tracks Institutional Impact. The session was attended by Vice Chancellors, ACE Centre Leaders and other team members from the ACE Impact Centres. Professor Salifu Mohammed (PSC member from Ghana) chaired the session and Dr Sylvia Mkandawire (ACE Impact Program Manager) facilitated.

One of the lessons from ACE 1 Project is that Centres of Excellence benefit from strong institutional support provided by Vice Chancellors and from their resident institutional capacities. DLI7 aims to measure institutional impact and gives flexibility to the ACE institutions to develop milestones based on their institutional needs and goals. Each approved Centre Implementation Plan may contain milestone(s) of results and activities to improve institutional impact. Under the ACE Impact Project, university leadership is responsible for the implementation of DLI7. 10-15 % of the ACE budget will be used to support institutional impact strengthening activities. Institutions with multiple centres are expected to develop a cohesive and coordinated plan for DLI7

DLI 7 Institutional Impact Elements are composed of:

1. Meaningful university-wide regional strategy
2. Open and competitive selection of the head of university, head of department or dean
3. Institutional accreditation steps
4. Participation in PASET Benchmarking
5. Institutional Impact Milestones. Examples of potential milestones can include activities associated with:
 - a. University development/fundraising office or initiative
 - b. Strengthening a university career center
 - c. Institutional marketing and communication
 - d. Strengthening research management capacity
 - e. Enhanced digital infrastructure and networking

Global good practices in university policies, practices and operations were discussed through four exciting presentations in line with developing excellent African Universities. These presentations were delivered by Dr Jamil Salmi, Daniela Iacona, Kristin Kolshus and Emily Robin.

1. World Class Universities and the road to academic excellence by Dr Jamil Salmi (Higher Education Expert with the World Bank)

There must be an alignment of the key factors that would lead to excellent and high-performing African Universities. These factors are: (1) *Concentration of talent* - students, teaching staff, researchers and the international dimension; (2) *Abundant resources* - public funds, tuition fees, research grants and endowment funds and (3) *Favourable governance* - strategic vision, vibrant leadership team, culture of excellence, autonomy and academic freedom.

Several factors accelerate the attainment of world class universities. Some of these are leadership, inspiration and vision; capacity building through internationalization; being a niche institution and / or offering niche programs; curriculum, pedagogical and managerial innovations; strategic planning and benchmarking; Inspirational leadership (vision & passion; transformational) and capacity building through internationalization.

Dr Jamil Salmi concluded by sharing some words of caution to be considered by African Universities as they work to establish excellent universities. Universities must design the curriculum before constructing the facilities, put in place favourable conditions to attract and keep talent, avoid creating islands of excellence in a sea of mediocrity, invest with sustainability in mind, beware the international rankings, avoid the danger of imitating existing universities and they must search for excellence to improve the quality and relevance of their graduates and research.

After tea break Prof Joe Sarr (Vice Chancellor from UCAD) chaired the session whose aim was to provide context and specific examples of how ACE Impact institutions led by their VCs can address DLI7.

2. Basic principles of accreditation by Daniela Iacona from ABET

Daniela Iacona explained that ABET accredits academic programs leading to specific degrees in a specific discipline. ABET does not accredit institutions. Accreditation matters because it provides value for students, institutions, faculty and the general public. It also matters because it demonstrates that programs meet threshold standards to produce graduates that are ready to enter “the profession” and provides assurance that institutions are committed to improving the students’ educational experience.

The ABET Accreditation Process involves continuous improvement process (assess student performance against criteria, use results to improve educational experience, periodic self-study report); on-site evaluation by ABET team; periodic reviews and publishing of accredited programs on the ABET website during October of each year

3. Research for Life and reducing the scientific knowledge gap by Kristin Kolshus

Research4Life is a collective name for five programmes – Hinari, AGORA, OARE, ARDI and GOALI – that provide developing countries with free or low-cost access to academic and professional peer-reviewed content online. Research4Life is a public-private partnership of WHO, FAO, UNEP, WIPO, ILO, Cornell and Yale Universities, the International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers and up to 155 international publishers.

Research4Life is responding to several challenges faced by many libraries in low-income countries - lack of access to current scientific literature; limited budget for important peer-reviewed journals; and limited up-to-date research needed for discovering evidence, sharing findings, and informing teaching, practice and public policy. There are over 100K resources now available through Research4Life - African countries mostly fall under Group A who get free access to Research4Life resources. Other African countries are in Group B and can enjoy low cost access to Research4Life resources

The value of Research4Life is demonstrated below:

- An average journal subscription costs approximately: US\$ 1,731
- Research4Life provides access up to 20,000 journals
- Total monetary value provided to each institution, up to US\$ 34,620,000

Most ACE centre institutions registered for Research4Life. Most ACE centre countries have free access (except Nigeria). HOWEVER - Not all universities share credentials across faculties. Some ACE centres do not know they have access - usage statistics could be higher. Librarians are often gatekeepers: ACEs must ask them for the access credentials. It is OK to share the Research4Life credentials with colleagues, students, professors or other members of the institution (not outside the ACE institution).

4. Advancement in Higher Education from Emily Robin from CASE

Advancement is the strategic process by which institutions advance mission-appropriate constituent relations through the integration of the recruitment and enrolment, marketing and communications, and development programs. Advancement leads to revenue generation. Advancement involves marketing and recruitment; communications and brand management; institutional partnerships (corporate & foundation relations); alumni relations; fundraising development and advancement services. African Higher Education institutions have engaged with philanthropy to raise money through alumni relations, working with businesses and securing grants from foundations and trusts.

Q&A for Dr Jamil Salmi's session

1. What can we do to also improve the system – i.e. cause systemic changes? How can we move away from this cycle? How to deal with changes to officers of the universities? [*Change starts with you*]
2. In view of the limited resources – what to do? [*It's not easy. Use the limited resources properly*]
3. How to access the resources from Dr Jamil [<https://tertiaryeducation.org/publications/>]
4. How to deal with tension between research and teaching: [*Its difficult to measure the quality of teaching*]
5. Relations with Private Sector – what are the best practices? [*Dare to be different. Map your partnership needs carefully*]
6. What can we learn from Football clubs? [*excellence, valuing talent, always aiming to win the cup*]

Q&A after the last three

- What are the fees for the ABET program accreditation? [*ACEs must contact ABET for a detailed costing because it depends on the program. However, US\$8000 for one team member visit, maintenance fees of \$1,000 as annual fees and the ACE must pay costs for travel for the ABET team.*]
- What is the time frame for ABET accreditation? [*Request accepted in January. Self-studies to be submitted by June. Sept and Dec there are times for ABET visits. Final decisions are communicated in July. It is an 18-24 months process*]
- Are there any experiences with ABET accreditation in West Africa? [*There are experiences in Egypt and Morocco*]
- Please do not impose ABET standards. Africa is different. [*This is voluntary*]
- Are all standards equal? [*No*]
- Comment: The percentage of corrupt Nigerians is very negligible
- Comment: 7 ACE centers paid for the Research4Life programs. But ACEs are not using the resources. Research4Life features open access journals and African research
- Which accrediting organization does ABET collaborate with? [*ABET has an MOU with CTI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative)*]