26th September 2019

PLENARY SESSION V: VERIFICATION AND DIGITZED REPORTING SYSTEM

Dr Sylvia Mkandawire the ACE Impact Project Manager from the AAU facilitated the session on ACE Impact Verification and the ACE Impact Digital Reporting System. The presenters were **Mrs Adeline Addy** (AAU), **Ms Maud Kouadio** (World Bank), **Ms Nodumo Dhlamini** (AAU) and **Miss Georgina Diana Maison** (AAU).

Mrs Addy and Ms Kouadio fully described all the Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLI 1 to DLI 7). The timeline for the finalization of basic readiness and full readiness for ACE Impact 1 institutions indicates that these must be completed by 6th December 2019. The DLR 4.2 which tracks the number of internationally recognized centre relevant research publications must include tracing of research abstracts.

Examples of milestone formulations were discussed to guide the ACEs. Milestones must be specific to the context of each ACE. A sample calculation of students earning for disbursements was discussed. Some DLIs are verified as they are achieved, and others are verified at specific times of the year.

The Technopolis presentation was on ACE Impact Disbursement Linked Results that are verified by an External Evaluator - these are DLR 3.1 PhD Students, DLR 3.2 Master Students, DLR 3.4 Bachelor, DLR 4.2 Research publications and DLR 5.2 Outreach-internships. The verification process was also discussed. Lessons learned since 2004 were around the need to improve data management processes at the ACE level.

Questions after the Verification Presentation

1. We must adapt the verification methodology to the focus on impact under the ACE Impact Project. How has the verification methodology been adapted to the focus on impact – e.g. social and economic impact of publications? [We *can't focus on the numbers only. e.g. When verifying students' data, questions are asked about their levels of satisfaction, their experiences during training, their employability and how they have been impactful in their workplaces.*]
2. How do we measure impact? [*This is done through tracer studies and evaluation exercises. There must be agreed indicators of impact linked to the national development priorities. We must acknowledge that there are other players who contribute to the impact that we achieve.*]

PARALLEL SESSION III: Monitoring Evaluation and Learning

The facilitators of this parallel session were Mrs Adeline Addy (M&E officer, AAU) & Maud Kouadio, Educ. Specialist Consultant, WB)

Ms Nodumo Dhlamini gave an update on the digitization of the ACE IMPACT Reporting System. The goals for digitization are to preserve ACE data and information beyond the project life, simplify the role of data collection and facilitate data analysis. The emphasis when designing this system is to make it a "Simple and User-Friendly System". The key deliverables for the ACE IMPACT Digital system are:

1. Systems Analysis & Needs Requirements
2. Incorporation of ACE IMPACT Indicators.
3. Incorporation of verification needs of the verifying agencies
4. Incorporation of mentoring support from the thematic experts
5. Generation of reports for routine analysis

6. Development of a Data Analytics and Statistics Page
7. Ensuring a quality User Experience in the design of the system user interfaces
8. Development of a system User Manual

The lessons learned to date include that data management capacities at the ACE level vary, there have been data quality and data validation challenges. Enforcement and support is needed from all the stakeholders.

Miss Georgina Diana Maison did a demonstration of the online ACE Impact Reporting System. She showed the participants how to log into the system, how to download the indicator file templates, how to populate the downloaded Indicator files and how to edit a submitted report.

Q&A after the digitization of the ACE Impact Reporting System

1. Explain how to manage the telephone number format in the excel spreadsheet [*Miss Georgina Maison is available to assist those who require a tutorial on this*]
2. Can we delete an uploaded report? [*When you want to delete a previously uploaded report, you must upload the new version. The system overwrites the old one*.]
3. Can users change their passwords? [*Yes they can*]
4. Can the system aggregate reports? Can the system calculate earnings? Does the system generate statistics? [*Yes, the system can produce reports as per the user needs. The users must state what reports they need, and these will be configured*]
5. Does the system facilitate general document reviews, version tracking and document approvals? [*This functionality is being built. The experts and ACEs will be involved in determining the needs requirements for this tool*]
6. Does the system give email notifications after a report is submitted? Who receives the notifications? [*This will be a feature of the system. The AAU MEL Officer and the ACE MEL Officer will receive email notification of a report submission*]

Q&A after the Verification Presentation by Technopolis

1. We must agree at the outset on "Sectoral Stakeholders". Who are the target employers? What are we learning from ACE1 in terms of verification and disbursements?
2. Explain the format of the letters indicating the ACE Project Team Members. [*These letters must be official from the Vice Chancellor's Office*]
3. When a university has more than one ACE – who manages the DLI7? [*The earnings are managed by the University*]
4. For Project Management Certification, is it acceptable to use a degree in Project Management? [*This will be communicated by AAU to those ACEs that have this case. They must contact AAU*]
5. Senegal would like guidance on where to access appropriate Project Management Training [*AAU will contact the Senegal ACE IMPACT centres*]
6. Is it not better to allow other types of publications that can be more accessible and relevant to the sub-region's needs? [*If ACEs want international accreditation they must publish in internationally recognized journals. ACEs must still develop locally relevant publications for the various local stakeholders*]
7. How do we promote collaboration among the ACEs when we are told students cannot be double counted? [*This must not discourage collaboration among the ACEs. Let's agree at the beginning how to share the outcomes from the collaborations.*]

8. We need to agree on how to handle illiterate stakeholders that the project interfaces with – e.g. during short professional training events [*Agreed. Maybe by documenting pictures?*]
9. The gap between potential earnings and actual disbursements is too huge. [*Noted. Let's work hard to ensure we close this gap through ensuring our results are fully verifiable*]
10. The 3rd party verifiers must work with local partners to build capacity for Africa. Foreign numbers calling a local number in Africa can be ignored by the targeted stakeholders. [*Agreed*]
11. We have students already – how can we begin to gather our information? [*AAU will share the templates that the ACEs can immediately use to collect their data on e.g. students*]