

27 September 2019

PLENARY SESSION VI: FEEDBACK FROM THE PARALLEL SESSIONS

From Wednesday to Thursday there were thematic breakout sessions to facilitate knowledge / lesson sharing among the ACE Centres. The thematic group meetings were facilitated by the primary and secondary experts assigned to support the different thematic areas. The thematic groups were Health, Environment, Mining and extractives, STEM education, ICT, Urban/transport Logistics, Engineering, Agriculture, Power and Water. Prof. H. Abarchi, the PSC Member from Niger, facilitated the session

Key Messages

1. Networking groups by thematic areas have been beneficial
2. How do we measure the impact on development?
3. Team building skills are key for the success of the ACEs
4. Management and Governance are fundamental for the success of ACEs
5. Strategies for recruiting and retaining female and regional students include full scholarships, cultural integration, health insurance schemes, better communication, efficient student services and others
6. PhD students must be supported through special mentoring programs
7. We need to strengthen the video conferencing technologies.
8. The signing of financial agreements was not in the control of the ACEs and it affected the effectiveness of the ACEs
9. Suggestions to collaborate effectively by setting up a mailing list and contacts database to facilitate close engagement
10. The websites are our main visibility tools – we can work with our students to maintain the websites in terms of new and relevant content
11. Remunerating ACE Team Members in a university is an issue in some centres. ACEs are encouraged to find other ways to motivate their team members – e.g. support conference attendance, supporting publishing.

Q&A

- Are we allowed to replace 2 MSc students with 1 PhD student? [*We can have a conversation about this. But try to stick to what is agreed on. We would like this to be customized to the ACEs. The numbers are indicative – we encourage you to do more*]

COUNTRY ROUNDTABLE - GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES & WORLD BANK COUNTRY Co-TTLs

Prof. Tona the CERSA Center Leader facilitated this session. The objective was to share reflections on countries' experiences in the ACE I project. The Panellists were asked to share their reflections on ACE preparation lessons, implementation experiences, ACE results in their country, most typical challenges and how they have addressed them and any other advice. The Panellists were:

- Dr Joshua Atah (ACE Focal Point, Nigeria);
- Ms Aisha Garba Mohammed (WB ACE Country Co-TTL, Nigeria);
- Prof. Salifu (PSC member, Ghana);
- Mrs Eunice Yaa Brimfah Ackwerh (WB ACE Country Co-TTL, Ghana);
- Madam Assiba Benedicta Houetcheno (ACE Focal Point, Benin)

SPEAKER	LESSONS
<p>Ghana experience - Prof. Salifu Mohammed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We took a long-time to get off the ground • The Ministry of Finance seemed to think Higher education was getting too much money • Had to lobby the Ministry of Finance to understand the importance of investing in Higher Education • The cabinet and parliament had to approve the finance agreement. It took more than a year to get the finance agreement approved • We learned the need to carry all the key stakeholders with us • Let's see this ACE project in the context of our national development efforts • Its important to work in parallel – and not wait • Motivation for ACE Teams was an issue. But we promoted an environment for academics to do research and to attend conferences • International Accreditation – we must be globally benchmarked and ranked. But they must still be locally relevant. We must meet the international standards
<p>Mrs Eunice Yaa Brimfah Ackwerh (WB ACE Country Co-TTL, Ghana)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The country review meetings are crucial. They brought the key stakeholders together. They allowed the ACEs to take stock • This is also important for implementation tracking • Healthy competition was a good outcome • Common challenges require common strategies – e.g. importation of delicate chemicals for the Ghana ACEs was resolved • Before the country review meetings – all ACEs did their home-works • DLIs are KING. Keep your eyes on your implementation plans • Finance Officers – “Learn how to do a withdrawal application to the World Bank”
<p>Dr Joshua Atah (ACE Focal Point, Nigeria)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its important to know the project that you are working on. Participate in the project design and the concept note writing. Know the DLIs • The money is not a gift. Your country will pay this money back. • Prepare to negotiate so that you get the best for your country. Be in touch with your institutions • Prepare for the political angle of negotiating and lobbying • Be available to participate in all PSC meetings • Keep pushing until your projects become effective • Draw up a checklist to guide you • Get familiar with the expected results • Keep an eye on what the ACEs in your country are doing. Read all the reports • Try to communicate what your ACEs are doing and achieving. Use as many channels to provide information • Prepare to manage and transform conflict situations – be available • As the number of participating countries increase – its time to come together to peer review, compare notes and learn from each other • National Accreditation was easier in Nigeria – through NUC • In Nigeria we struggled with International Accreditation of our programs. Can we get to a stage where African countries can handle

SPEAKER	LESSONS
	international accreditation? E.g. Accreditors from Nigeria visit ACEs in the Gambia and review their programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Euro200k was spent on international accreditation • AAU could create a platform for collaborating
Nigeria (WB ACE Country Co-TTL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The timings for disbursements have been a challenge • A strong communication strategy is very important
Madam Assiba Benedicta Houetcheno (ACE Focal Point, Benin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Committees are used to troubleshoot problems affecting the Benin ACE • On coordination – we engage all the stakeholders – • Leadership in the Ministry of Higher Education in Benin was very key for the successes in Benin • Included the new ACEs in the steering committee

Q&A

1. We are an emerging ACE in Food Security. At which level did you face the most hurdles during implementation of your ACE Projects [*The most difficult situation is that in Nigeria we have many ACEs. Each step of implementation comes with several challenges. In Nigeria we have over 150 universities – this creates challenges.*]
2. AAU could anchor international accreditation. Let's agree on a template. Let's have an Africa-wide international accreditation. We must maintain international standards.

ACE I Project Key Next Steps (Mrs Himdat Bayusuf)

1. Accelerate implementation by ACE1 Institutions
2. Writing of the Implementation Completion Reports (ICRs) at a country level must be prioritized. A working committee to support the ICR writings will be put in place.
3. The 13th ACE1 and 3rd ACE IMPACT workshops will be held from 24-28 February 2020 in Abuja, Nigeria

1st ACE Impact Project Key Next Steps (Mrs Himdat Bayusuf)

1. Accelerate effectiveness for all the 5 countries.
2. About to declare Burkina Faso effective
3. Ghana is close. Senegal close. Guinea has a few issues to finalize. Djibouti has many actions still to be done. Financing agreements and legal opinions are priority
4. DLI1 verification to enable first disbursement

2nd ACE Impact Project Key Next Steps (Dr Ekuu Bentil)

1. November 26th, 2019 is the date that we will know if the 2nd ACE Impact Project is approved
2. Performance contracts must be reviewed and signed as soon as possible
3. Work on the effectiveness conditions right away
4. We hope all 2nd ACE Impact Centres will be effective by March 2020

OFFICIAL CLOSING CEREMONY

The closing ceremony was facilitated by Mademba Ndiaye the Senior Communication Specialist with the World Bank office in Senegal.

Closing remarks were delivered by

1. Vincent Perrot (World Bank co-TTL for ACE 1) spoke on behalf of the World Bank ACE Team. He congratulated all the partners and thanked all for the good work- he also thanked ushers, drivers and hotel staff. This had been a big meeting with over 400 participants from 12 African countries.
2. Dr Ousmane Diagana, the World Bank Human Resource Vice President thanked the Government of Senegal for the excellent collaboration. He also thanked the AAU, ministries in each of the participating countries and the various ACEs. He explained that the ACE project was the flagship project of the World Bank and the Bank was investing several hundreds of millions of USD to address the knowledge and skills gap in Sub-Saharan Africa. He said that the Bank was very pleased with the results of the ACE on the ground. USD145 million is being invested for ACE Impact 1 and USD131 million is targeted for the 2nd ACE Impact with co-financing from AFD. Dr Diagana said they were proud of the bilingual aspects promoted by the ACE Project. He reiterated the importance of Higher Education to support primary and secondary education. Economic transformation can be achieved through investing in STEM education and research.
3. Hon. M. Amadou Hott, the Minister of Economy Planning and Cooperation in Senegal was represented by Hon Alioune Ndiaye (Permanent Secretary). He mentioned that he was honoured to represent the two ministers (Economy and Higher Education). He emphasized some take-away messages from the PSC meetings. He said that the priorities were implementing the rules for ACE 1 closing, handling supervision missions, handling disbursements. Migration to ACE Impact for ACE 1 centres was also a priority. He concluded by saying that the five days of reflection were helpful. He called on all the partners to pull their resources (intellectual, human and financial) together to transform African Higher Education. Finally, Hon Alioune Ndiaye declared the meeting closed.