Expert Consultative Roundtable on Transitioning from Distance Learning and E-learning in Higher Education in West Africa
20 May 2021

CESA SUB-CLUSTER ON OPEN, DISTANCE, ONLINE EDUCATION AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING OF AAU WEBINAR SERIES

INTRODUCTION

The ten-year Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-2025 which was adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union in June 2016, in Addis Ababa is yet another response geared at the implementation of the AU Agenda 2063. The other AU strategy that is relevant is STISA 2024 that was adopted in July 2014 and is meant to exploit Science, Technology and Innovation to sustain the socio-economic development of Africa through various efforts spearheaded by the Pan African University (PAU) and NEPAD. CESA was designed to be in line with the Global UNESCO Education 2030 programme of May 2015, sometimes referred to as the Incheon Declaration and Framework (World Education Forum, 2015) and it is also expected to contribute towards the achievement of objective 4 of the UN SDGs. However, the COVID 19 pandemic presents new opportunities for entrenching elearning and lifelong learning opportunities to include new transnational educational strategies. Also, the UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualification concerning higher education requires that national, regional and continental level strategies are developed to facilitate Open, elearning, flexible learning and transnational education opportunities supported by elearning arrangements.

It has been proposed to set up, with the support of the European Commission, in the framework of the HAQAA initiative (Harmonization, Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education in Africa), a Policy-Data Unit (PDU) to support the collection of data and the production of policy reports on African Higher Education and contribute to effective coordination of the CESA HE Cluster by the AAU in collaboration with the International Network for Higher Education in Africa (INHEA). This will provide reliable and up-to-date inputs on higher education in Africa, making them easily accessible, as well as aligning them to the assessment of the objectives of the CESA HE Cluster in particular, and the CESA objectives in general.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE SUB-CLUSTER ON OPEN, DISTANCE AND ELEARNING

CESA 2016-25 is premised on the expectations of attaining a paradigm shift of educational delivery towards more transformative education and training systems to meet the knowledge, competencies, skills, research, innovation and creativity necessary to nurture African core values for the promotion of sustainable development. As a follow up, a new multi-stakeholder Higher Education cluster was approved by the Heads of State and Governments of the AU in June 2016 and subsequently launched on the 8th June 2017 during the Golden Jubilee celebrations of AAU at the culmination of the 14th Annual General Meeting. AAU the hosting secretariat for the cluster had formed thirteen (13) sub-clusters by September 2017. In line with the HAQAA2 Programme, AAU is to establish a Policy Data Unit (PDU) to support the achievement of the objectives of CESA. To this end, it has been proposed to organize a series of online CESA HE Cluster events, with a common thread linked to data collection for policymaking. This process will lead up to the AAU General Conference in July 2021, where a session will be dedicated to HAQAA2 CESA-related activities and the PDU concept will be presented to Vice-Chancellors.

This concept note is for the sub-cluster titled *CESA Sub-Cluster on Open, Distance, Online Education and Flexible Learning.*

The initial membership of the sub-cluster is proposed to be as follows:

1. *Goski Alabi – Coordinator, Consulting President, Laweh Open University and West African Representative, ACDE.*

2. *Prof. Elifas Bisanda, Vice-Chancellor Open University of Tanzania & ACDE East African Representative*

3. *Prof. Rotimi Ogidan - Representative ACDE and The National Open University of Nigeria*

4. *Prof. Mandla Makhanya - Member, UNISA, South Africa.*

5. *Dr Teresah.Mwoma –Executive Director ACDE.*

6. *Dr. Bakary Diallo – Member, African Virtual University, Kenya.*

7. *Dr. Boubakar Barry - Representative of WACREN*

8. *Peter Kodjie – All Africa Students Union (AASU)*

OBJECTIVES

Within the Higher Education CESA Cluster, Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), this sub-cluster is expected to provide guidance and strategy for new developments in eLearning and flexible learning to the higher education stakeholders in Africa. Most importantly, it is to provide guidelines that will facilitate the strategy on critical factors that can propel or impede effective exploitation of the three modes of delivery of open learning, eLearning and flexible learning. The aim is to expand both access and the quality of delivery of higher education and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4.

However, COVID 19 presents new opportunities and Challenges for eLearning and transnational education. Clearly, COVID 19 crisis, therefore, brings a shift from traditional distance learning to eLearning and blended learning, which have become key vehicles for transnational education. Critical Issues for effective eLearning are:

- Recognition of Open, Distance and eLearning Certificates.

- Quality assurance of Open, Distance and eLearning

- Integrity of examinations and other modes of assessments

- Perceptual challenges of Open education which still exists, hampering the acceptability and effective adoption of Open Education, Distance and eLearning

As institutions strive to move into eLearning and blended modes a number of interventions are required at the national, regional and continental levels to support and promote eLearning and open education. To address the challenges associated with Open and Distance education, it will be necessary to work with Institutional, national and regional bodies to collect evidence-based data to inform policy and strategy.

The Expert Consultative Roundtable, which is expected to be the first of five regional webinars with a current focus on West Africa, will bring together stakeholders in Higher Education to discuss strategies for transitioning from the current distance learning practices to eLearning and blended learning modes post-COVID. A minimum of 150 participants is expected for the webinar with translation provided in English, French and Portuguese. The final report on the webinar will be delivered at the COREVIP in July, 2021. This is among a number of online series of activities to gather and present the needed information to the PDU.

Agenda

Time: 10:00am – 12:00 noon GMT (2 hours)

- *Prof. Olugbemero Jegede: Moderator: Prof. Emeritus, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)*
- *Prof. Goski Alabi, President, ACDE, Coordinator CESA Sub Cluster for Open Distance and eLearning and Consulting President, Laweh Open University, Introduction and Purpose of the Round Table – 5 minutes*
- *Prof. Boubakar Barry CEO/Directeur Général, WACREN*
- *Overview of The adequacy of infrastructure and equipment for transitioning from Distance Education to eLearning in ODeL Post COVID 19 – 15 mins*

Panel Discussion (15 mins each)

- *Prof. Olivia Kwapong; Dean School of Continuing and Distance Education, University of Ghana. Management Perspective*
- *Prof. Rotimi Ogidan: Full Prof. Guidance and Counselling, Education Faculty, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) – Faculty Perspective*
- *Mr. Peter Kodjie: Secretary-General, All African Students Union – Students Perspective*
- *Dr. Teresa Mwoma: Executive Director, African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) ACDE Strategies for Transitioning to eLearning and the ACDE Quality Tool Kit*
- *Other Experiences and Q&A (35 mins)*
- *Closing remarks (5 mins)*