

**Concept Note**

**Developing Capacity for Teaching Excellence:  
Lessons from Pedagogical Leadership in Africa (PedaL)**

**PedaL Stakeholders' Forum**

**November 29, 2021**

## 1. Context

African Universities have the mandate of transforming society through knowledge production, dissemination, research, and extension. However, they face two major crises, first the “quantitative” crisis occasioned by the inadequacy of universities to meet the ever-growing need and demand for education in the context of the continent’s increasing population. Secondly, the more critical, quality and relevance crises manifested in an increasing mismatch of skills with labour market demands. While both the crises of quantity and quality are as a result of the economic downturn in Africa, they can also be causes.<sup>1</sup>

At the university level, a wide range of systemic weaknesses are manifested in increased class sizes, inadequate infrastructure and a heavy teaching and administrative workload that is exacerbated by a weak or lack of a reward system for teaching excellence. It is also worth of note that teaching staff in African universities are highly qualified in their disciplines, but lack appropriate pedagogical skills. These factors have conspired to entrench a transmission and didactic model of teaching and learning.<sup>2</sup> The emphasis laid on transmission of content rather than active learning to foster deep understanding of concepts and theories undermines learning outcomes as well as critical thinking and application of knowledge for problem solving in practical life situations. Research has shown that passive learning strategies are often less effective at developing competencies than active approaches<sup>3</sup>. Consequently, the outcomes of higher education institutions are severely constrained; and, meeting the critical objective of graduate programmes to produce and nurture a pool of competent human resources and researchers that meet the needs of a rapidly changing and complex knowledge-driven society remains a challenge<sup>4</sup>.

The need to bridge the gap in skills mismatch of graduates and to improve the overall quality of higher education in African universities has led to increasing pressures to fast track the adoption of relevant pedagogical skills. It is against this background that the Pedagogical Leadership in Africa (PedaL) programme was launched in 2018. PedaL is supported through the Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform grant scheme managed by a consortium of the British Council, PwC and Universities UK International and funded by the UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

## 2. Pedagogical Leadership in Africa (PedaL)

The Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) is leading seven founding partners to develop and mainstream pedagogical innovations in university programmes across the continent. The founding partners are: African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA), Institute of Development Studies (IDS) of the University of Sussex, UK as well as five implementing partner universities: University of Ibadan in Nigeria; Egerton University in Kenya; University of Ghana in

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<sup>1</sup>ILO (2019). Skills and job mismatches in low and middle-income countries. Accessed from: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_726816.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_726816.pdf) on 19th August, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Mouton, J., & Wildschut, L. (Eds.). (2015). *Leadership and management: Case studies in training in higher education in Africa*. African Minds.

<sup>3</sup> Watson, C.E; and Green G. T. (2015). Large Class Pedagogy: Active Learning Practices that Follow the Research in proceedings of Conference on Higher Education Pp 89-90, February 4-6, 2015, Virginia, US.

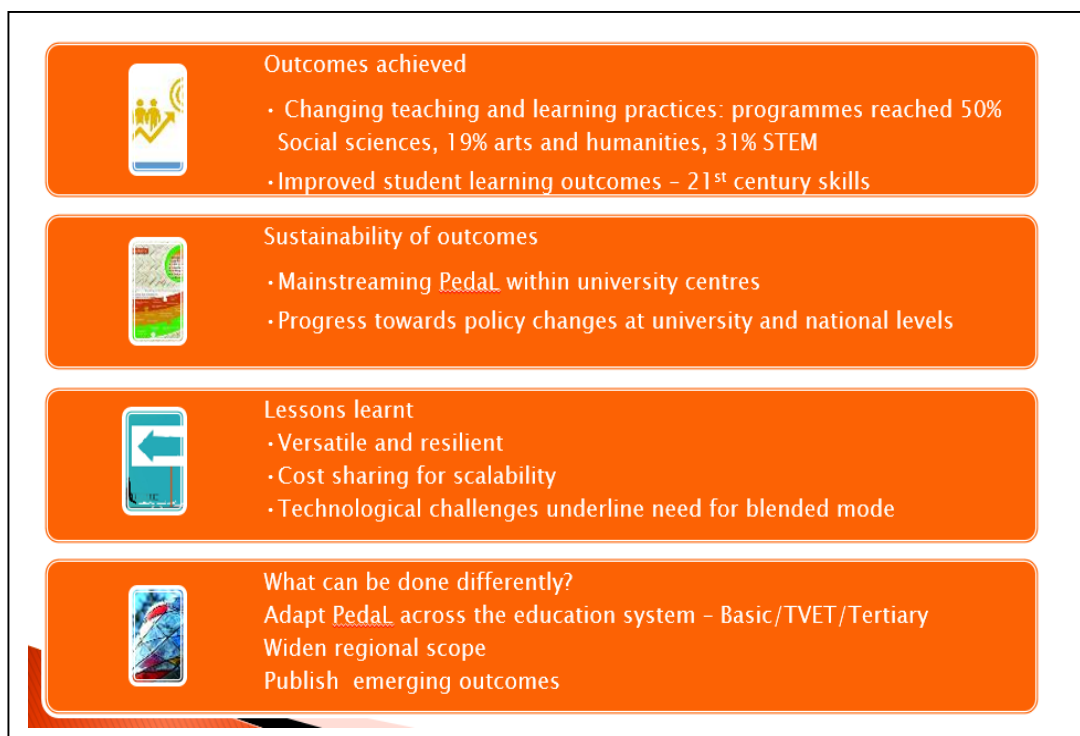
<sup>4</sup> Bandaranaike, S., & Willison, J. (2015). Building capacity for work-readiness: Bridging the cognitive and affective domains.

Ghana; University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania; and, Uganda Martyrs University in Uganda. Over the past four years, the PedaL partnership has expanded to include 90 universities in 11 African countries: Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa, Botswana and Malawi.

PedaL aims at transforming graduate education and its outcomes by building the capacity of university academics to use innovative pedagogy to enhance the design, context, processes and content of teaching and learning. PedaL training programme is offered both as a face-to-face programme and an online variant known as PedaL Online: Technology for Transformative Pedagogy. The goal is to maximise learning outcomes among students and subsequently to produce quality graduates who meet labour market needs.

An independent external evaluation of PedaL was undertaken between October 2020 and June 2021. The purpose was to establish PedaL achievements; analyse the extent to which factors that have influenced PedaL outcomes can be leveraged for its sustainability; document lessons learnt; and suggest recommendations for scaling up and sustaining the impact of PedaL. The report indicates that PedaL achieved its outcomes and shares useful lessons for scaling PedaL and broadening its impact.

### PedaL External Evaluation – Summary of Findings



### 3. PedaL Stakeholders’ Forum: Objectives, Key Activities and Expected Outcome

The Partnership for Pedagogical Leadership has involved a broad spectrum of education stakeholders throughout the life cycle of the PedaL project; from planning to project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. PedaL works closely with government officials, education policy actors drawn from various national, regional and global organisations; research

organisations; the media; development partners; and, university teaching staff and students to advance pedagogical transformation on the continent.

It is the collective and invaluable effort of PedaL stakeholders that has enabled PedaL to spread across different disciplines, levels of education and countries in four years. Due to its versatility, PedaL gained momentum and achieved unprecedented growth in the face of a ravaging COVID-19 pandemic.

The PedaL Partnership has therefore organised a stakeholders' forum to be held on November 29, 2021 in hybrid form (virtual and face-to-face). The event will bring together an estimated 400 higher education stakeholders and will fulfil the following four key objectives:

- Share outcomes of PedaL emerging from practice as well as the external evaluation of PedaL;
- Strengthen collaboration across universities on pedagogical transformation;
- Discuss options for scaling PedaL across the education system;
- Highlight opportunities for educational reforms.

The stakeholders' forum will include a combination of opportunities for sharing information and learning from a variety of experiences through:

- A keynote address on teaching excellence for skills development and research;
- Presentations of case studies of classroom interactions and emerging outcomes;
- High level panel discussions with university leaders on university management structures, enabling environment and collaboration for pedagogical transformation;
- High level panel discussions with policy actors on opportunities for scaling pedagogical transformation across education system.

The event is expected to foster a deeper understanding of issues around pedagogical transformation. It will also provide an opportunity for integrating lessons learnt on how PedaL has approached pedagogical transformation in the design of relevant programmes. It is also envisaged that this forum will spark broad based ownership not only for mainstreaming pedagogical reforms but also broader educational reforms at university and national levels. Ultimately, scaling pedagogical innovations across education systems should enhance the quality and relevance of education and produce quality job-ready, entrepreneurial graduates to accelerate economic development, build inclusive societies and contribute to the social transformation of their countries.