Terms of Reference (TOR)
for
Regional Higher Education Data Hub

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The Benchmarking Initiative is one of several activities under the Partnership for skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET). This initiative is in line with PASET's objective of investing in the creation of a skilled workforce in sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries to maximize returns on domestic and foreign investments in key economic sectors; and to increase the capacity of universities and research centers to generate knowledge relevant to Africa's development challenges. PASET is tapping into the experiences of fast-growing economies such as Korea, Brazil, China and India, to learn how to build Africa's capability in applied sciences, engineering and technology (ASET). PASET's core initiatives include the Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (RSIF), the Benchmarking Initiative, Country ASET Action plans and the Regional TVET Centers of Excellence.

PASET Governance

PASET's governance structure was formalized by a Charter adopted in July 2016. The Charter lays out the objectives, principles and norms for the efficient functioning of PASET. It also presents the criteria for governments and other partners to become formal members and be represented on PASET's governance bodies. PASET's governance structure as laid out in the Charter comprises the following bodies:

(i) Board of Directors (BOD): The Board of Directors comprises Ministers of Education/Higher Education of countries that support the PASET Charter and have made commitments to the RSIF, PASET's flagship initiative. The Board is the key decision-making authority of PASET and ascertains the strategic direction of the partnership and its operations. At present, the Board of Directors comprises Ministers of Higher Education/ Education of Senegal, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire, the President of the Korea Development Institute (KDI), Executive Director of the Executive Committee, and the Education Practice Managers of the World Bank.

(ii) Executive Committee (EC): The EC consists of senior technical staff of the Ministers represented on the Board and is headed by the Executive Director. The EC implements the policies, programs and initiatives decided by the Board with the full delegated authority of the Board.

(iii) Consultative Advisory Group (CAG): The CAG is an advisory body that includes eminent scientists, academics, TVET experts, and private sector leaders to provide technical advice to the PASET Board and EC. It currently consists of 12 members appointed by the Board from Africa and partner countries

like Korea and China, who share their expertise and provide guidance to develop PASET's various initiatives.

(iv) Secretariat: The Secretariat, in the interim hosted at the World Bank, facilitates PASET's governance and initiatives working closely with the EC. In this role, the World Bank provides technical assistance at the regional and country levels, convenes and organizes meetings of the PASET governing bodies, organizes knowledge sharing events, and works with the Board and EC to build partnerships with other sub-Saharan African and partner countries.

Membership and participation in PASET activities

Currently, five SSA countries are members of PASET – Senegal, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire. Four other countries - Tanzania, Nigeria, Guinea, and Mauritania - have expressed substantial interest in joining, while further 11 countries have demonstrated interest in learning more about PASET including Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Mozambique, Togo, The Gambia, Uganda, and Zambia. Till date about 26 SSA countries and 5 partner countries have participated in PASET activities including the 4th PASET Forum held in April 2017.

1.2.   Rationale for Establishing a Regional Higher Education Data Hub

As economies move up the technology ladder, seeking to reduce the gap with the leading industrial economies, their need for education and skills grows, particularly at the higher level. In SSA, most countries are at the stage of evolving from low productivity agricultural economies to more diversified economies with a higher share of manufacturing and services. As a result, they are increasingly focusing on developing their human capital to face the unmet demand for highly skilled technicians, engineers, medical workers, agricultural scientists and researchers, particularly in the rapidly growing sectors of extractive industries, energy, water, environment, and infrastructure, as well as in service sectors such as hospitality, health, banking, and ICT. For that purpose, they must rely on their universities that are active in the ASET fields as key drivers of development.

Measuring the performance of their ASET institutions has therefore become a high priority for all African economies keen on improving the national capacity to produce advanced human capital and undertake leading edge research. Comparisons of higher education systems and institutions around the world have indeed revealed wide variations in their results, even between those with similar funding levels and common country characteristics.

To continue improving the quality and relevance of learning, research and technology transfer in institutions offering ASET programs in the SSA Region, the World Bank, under the PASET initiative, launched the Regional Benchmarking of African Universities Initiative in November 2015. This followed a mini-pilot (seven universities) exercise in 2014 which led to a call to scale-up and institutionalize the exercise. To date, forty-eight institutions from fourteen SSA countries have volunteered to participate in this exercise. A scaled-up pilot exercise was carried out in early 2016 for which 31 universities (out of the 48) submitted some data. This was followed by a capacity building workshop in mid-June 2016, where the results of the exercise were discussed in detail with international experts. Under the initiative, an internationally recognized methodology developed in partnership with the Shanghai Jiao Tong University Center for World-Class Universities has been adapted to the African context, in close consultations with

The **PASET** Regional Benchmarking
Initiative to Strengthen African Universities

PASET
Partnership for skills
in Applied Sciences,
Engineering & Technology

An Africa-led initiative to bridge the skills gap in Applied Sciences, Engineering, & Technology

relevant university, national and regional stakeholders. This is in line with PASET's goal of establishing high quality data systems and benchmarking of ASET programs and institutions in at least ten SSA countries.

The long-term sustainability of the initiative is of utmost importance. Therefore, PASET is keen on providing technical assistance to facilitate an appropriate knowledge transfer to an African institution interested in becoming a knowledge and reference center for data and research on higher education systems and institutions in the SSA Region. This will be done in collaboration with international partners with similar interests and expertise. The selected institution will incorporate and build upon the existing knowledge including methodologies, templates and reports, which will be shared after the selection.

The benchmarking initiative will strive towards being closely integrated with other national and regional level initiatives in support of higher education capacity building across Africa, such as PASET's Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund, the Africa Centers of Excellence project and various national/regional quality assurance schemes, all complementing each other to achieve the same goal: the strengthening of African institutions in quality and relevance. The initiative will also encourage institutions and national agencies to improve data collection, management and analysis, and to carry out graduate tracer studies and student surveys.

1.3. Key Objectives

Given its regional nature, the Regional Benchmarking Initiative requires an Africa-based Facilitation Unit, which can serve as a regional higher education data hub and effectively carry out the initiative's activities. The Data Hub would:

- ✓ Facilitate benchmarking, graduate tracer studies, student surveys and other relevant exercises under the initiative that are relevant for the SSA higher education sector and based on global best practices;
- ✓ Support the SSA higher education sector by providing capacity building opportunities for higher education institutions and government agencies in quality data collection, analysis, interpretation and its strategic use; and
- ✓ Invest in key partnerships that would add value through financial and/or in-kind support to the Hub's activities, ensuring it remains relevant and sustainable.

1.4. Key Activities/Deliverables

Based on demand from SSA universities and governments, activities of the Data Hub under the initiative will include:

Establishing Benchmarking, Graduate Tracer Studies and Related Activities
- Serving as the central location to collect, store, verify and analyze relevant higher education data from universities themselves as well as relevant national agencies
- Designing a website and online platform dedicated to the initiative's activities to make related information readily available to stakeholders and enhance the efficiency and accuracies in the data collection and analysis processes.

- Developing and regularly updating robust and customizable methodologies for the various components of the initiative (benchmarking, graduate tracer studies, student surveys, industry surveys)
- Carrying out regional level benchmarking on a regular basis, developing a data validation scheme, and developing report templates for such exercises and other related surveys.
- Publishing SSA higher education regional studies and data-based reports on a regular basis.

Capacity Building Activities
- Facilitating capacity building webinars and in-person workshops for knowledge-sharing and networking on institutional research and for discussing the results of the various exercises (including benchmarking, tracer studies, etc.) to encourage peer learning and introduce global best practices to participants at regional and national levels

- Providing technical assistance to universities and national agencies within the SSA region to develop their own methodologies and establish their Management Information Systems (MIS) in partnership with well-established higher education organizations/agencies (through trainings and internship opportunities).

Administration and Partnership
- Signing an agreement with PASET (immediately following selection).
- Constituting a Technical Advisory Board which will support and advise the Center, its stakeholders and other partners.
- Implementing a sustainable financial model, based on a combination of donor funds, fees collected from participating institutions, consultancies, reports and other externally generated revenue sources.
- Coordinating and working closely with various partners brought on board to provide Technical Assistance to the initiative in areas including benchmarking, graduate tracer studies, MIS, student survey, etc.).
- Developing a detailed annual workplan to be shared with the PASET Executive Committee for review and approval.
- Providing an annual report to the PASET Executive Committee for review and further transmission to the PASET Board of Directors.

1.5. Qualification Required
It is envisioned that the Regional Data hub will be hosted within a unit in an existing SSA institution/organization. The host institution will need to be (have):

- A sub-Saharan African organization/institution based in the region, with a legal entity status and with at least five existing professional staff;
- Leadership that are visionaries, supportive and can make such an initiative thrive in Africa;
- Expertise in institutional research, data analytics and reporting;
- Capable of providing capacity building support and workshops in the SSA region;

- Credible within the higher education community in Africa;
- Ability to work in English and French preferred (plus Portuguese desired); and
- Existing regular stream of funding and willingness to generate additional funding towards the day-to-day activities of the center.

1.6. Regional Data Hub Governance and Implementation Arrangements

The selected institution will serve as a Regional Higher Education Data Hub. For the first year, its staff will be trained by global experts through technical assistance convened by the PASET Secretariat (in the interim hosted at the World Bank). The PASET Secretariat provides technical assistance, and supports knowledge sharing and facilitation of PASET activities, including the Benchmarking initiative.

The host institution for the Data Hub will have the mandate to implement this Benchmarking initiative and will manage its day-to-day operations in line with the key activities outlined above. The Data Hub will be a unit within the host institution and will be led by a Project Facilitator responsible for overall project coordination and facilitation, and an adequate number of professional staff in key function areas, including a data scientist, database specialist, web specialist, finance director and a client relations/communications professional.

The Benchmarking Initiative will operate under the overall guidance and oversight of the PASET Board of Directors. However, the Data Hub will report directly to the PASET Executive Committee and work closely with the PASET Secretariat. The Technical Advisory Committee will meet regularly and among other things provide technical advice in the design of methodologies and processes and provide feedback on the annual workplan of the Data Hub.