



# The TESCEA approach to senior management engagement

## CASE STUDY

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For change to be sustained, it must have the support of those who make decisions and are responsible for resource distribution. This is why getting senior-level buy-in is so important for long-term success of transformed higher education.

## 1 Introduction

*“Transformative learning and teaching have become the language of top management when they are emphasising effective teaching to academic staff. This is something for TESCEA to be proud of. This has been evidenced in management meetings where TESCEA is mentioned to capacitate staff on their professional development.”*

Perpetua Kalimasi, Mzumbe University

University transformation on a scale that brings impact requires buy-in from the people in management who carry the vision of the institution. Change can begin from anywhere, but for it to be sustained, it must have the support of those who make decisions and are responsible for resource distribution.

The four TESCEA partner universities are different in character and structure, and therefore their approach to engaging with senior management varied.

Throughout the project, we allowed for the unique character of each university to determine how and what kinds of engagement was required. That said, the partnership also held collective workshops for Vice-Chancellors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors to ensure there was a shared understanding of what the project sought to attain, and the benefits to an institution if the right support was provided.

In this case study we share some of the approaches that emerged within the four universities.

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## 2 Customised approaches

### Uganda Martyrs University

Uganda Martyrs held workshops with management to ensure that they understood the aims and purpose of TESCEA. This awareness was crucial later on when their support was required to facilitate institutional change. One example was adopting a more circular classroom design, which promotes interaction and group work. The original design, with all students facing in one direction, reinforced a “banking” approach to education.

### TRANSFORMING EMPLOYABILITY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN EAST AFRICA

Transforming Employability for Social Change in East Africa (TESCEA) is helping young people in Tanzania and Uganda to use their skills and ideas to tackle social and economic problems. With partners in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya, TESCEA supports universities, industries, communities and government to work together to create an improved learning experience for students – both women and men. This improved learning experience fosters the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and allows for practical learning beyond the classroom that improves a graduate’s employability.

The TESCEA partnership is led by INASP (UK), working with Mzumbe University (Tanzania), University of Dodoma (Tanzania), Gulu University (Uganda), Uganda Martyrs University (Uganda), Association for Faculty Enrichment in Learning and Teaching (Kenya) and Ashoka East Africa (Kenya).

A key focus of the TESCEA team's engagement with senior management was ensuring that the delivery of online teaching would be effective and accessible to both students and lecturers. This mini-case study describes how senior management, recognising the expertise of TESCEA multipliers, asked them to lead capacity building.

### Mzumbe University

Mzumbe University formally invited management to officiate all TESCEA activities, including Joint Advisory Group (JAG) meetings, workshops for lecturers and students, and events, like guest speaker forums. This, along with a university procedure that necessitates management to sign event invitation letters, has created a strong awareness of the project and its importance to higher education transformation. What is more, at the initial stages of implementation, project leadership provided management with a weekly progress update.

*"The MU top management is aware of the capacity that TESCEA has built to the extent that they always request TESCEA multipliers when a pedagogical knowledge gap arises from the faculties and schools. All in all, awareness of TESCEA to MU management has been kind of routine... because what TESCEA has been doing aligns to a great extent on some important objectives and targets in the Mzumbe University Strategic Plan."*

Perpetua Kalimasi, Mzumbe University

### University of Dodoma

University of Dodoma took a similar approach to Mzumbe. During any TESCEA event, senior management is invited to participate and join discussions. This ensures that management understands the approach and provides those involved in TESCEA's implementation with the opportunity to meet senior management and explain issues of transformative learning.

### Gulu University

Gulu University was in a unique position because the Gulu Vice-Chancellor was the TESCEA project lead and therefore already aware of the goals of the project. However, the team has been careful to ensure that this awareness is shared with other members of management through quarterly technical steering group (TSG) meetings.

*"The TSG is the primary space for engaging with senior management. They oversee and approve all of the TESCEA activities. They also provide input into carrying out the TESCEA activities and strategically integrating the goals of TESCEA into policy. The TESCEA TSG is composed of all Deans and directors at the university, student guild representatives, The Academic Registrar, the Vice, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor."*

Dr David Monk, Gulu University

University management also participate in a range of project activities, which serves both to increase their awareness of TESCEA and also to indicate their support to participants. For instance, management are invited to open and close course redesign workshops.

Going further, members of management also participate directly in aspects of project delivery and decision making. For example, the Dean of Students leads the student engagement team, and the Dean of Agriculture and Environment initially led the community engagement team. The team reflects that this high level of engagement across the institution secured the project's position at the institution and made new structures and policies aimed at formalising TESCEA practices easier to develop and implement.

*"In the beginning, they were effective in bringing us into faculty meetings for presentations about [the] TESCEA model and were hopeful to get TESCEA into their programs. Now we will be able to use this and the policy that they participated in crafting to get a budget allocated for further course redesign training."*

Dr David Monk, Gulu University

### 3 Opportunities presented by this engagement

The primary goal of this approach is to transform teaching and learning, infusing tertiary education with critical thinking, problem-solving and gender responsiveness. At all universities, a change in the attitude of academic staff has been striking. Senior management also recognises additional benefits and opportunities presented by the approach, as shown below:

- **Gender**

At UDOM, a Gender Unit has been created to handle all issues related to gender across the university. The TESCEA team believes that TESCEA's activities and emphasis on gender contributed to management's decision to establish the unit.

- **Online teaching and learning**

Management at UMU has been impressed by how TESCEA multipliers have supported the transition to online teaching and learning during the pandemic.

*"What has worked well was the TESCEA's support for online teaching of students particularly at the beginning and during the COVID-19 period. With Schools, Universities and Tertiary Institutions mandated to go home in March 2020, I do not know what would have happened if we did not have TESCEA, let alone a good working relationship with their senior management. UMU Management and senior TESCEA [project] management proved to us that when there is collaboration between different entities or people, nothing is impossible. Out of this collaboration, online learning continued unabated. UMU now is recognized as one of those institutions that never stopped teaching its students. In a way, the collaboration put UMU as a University on a pedestal – every other university is asking how we have managed to teach online."*

Rev Dr Christopher B. Mukidi, Uganda Martyrs University

- **Engagement with industry**

At Mzumbe University, TESCEA's approach to stakeholder engagement, through joint advisory groups (JAGs), aligns with the University's strategic objective to engage the business community in curriculum improvement.

*"This engagement is connected with the network that MU has created with important government departments relevant for youth empowerment such as the Prime Minister's office who shared with MU various national guidelines and opportunities that MU graduates can exploit. Having seen the impact of TESCEA MU top management is planning to upscale the TESCEA approach through institutionalizing its components such as [the] JAG."*

Perpetua Kalimasi, Mzumbe University

### 4 Challenges encountered

All four universities negotiated challenges when undertaking this work. Notably, this involved ensuring that consistent engagement is maintained throughout implementation, and any scepticism is addressed by showcasing the impact of the approach. This was especially challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The team at UDOM recommend involving management *"in every step of the project so that they can be able to appreciate the difference that the interventions bring to the graduates"*.

Similarly, the Mzumbe University team reflects that *"the best practice to engage the senior management is to involve them in all the project activities, let them feel that what is happening is part and parcel of their daily business by linking what is done in the project with the university plans and/or national plans. This can be done by continuous awareness creation for them to buy in. The senior management is always after visible concrete impacts of the project activities which brings changes to the university practices. Give feedback of the activities done through sharing of reports and other evidence."*

For more case studies of TESCEA approaches see  
[www.transformhe.org](http://www.transformhe.org)

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Cover image: The TESCEA team and university senior management discuss TESCEA approaches at a Vice Chancellors Forum in 2020

Credit: Jon Harle

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