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Internationalisation, development and the continued growth of African HE partnerships

Several initiatives focusing on HE partnerships with African institutions have been announced over recent months (building of course on considerable increases in 'partnership' activity in recent years): some regionally-led, some based on bilateral aid or national development commitments. What are the driving aims of these initiatives, and how do they differ from other partnerships elsewhere?

Some inevitably reflect revised development budgets and strategies; others are independently organised academic links. Last December saw the allocation of US\$25 million for the US's Higher Education in Africa Program. There is also an increased development budget generally, and a broad commitment to 'rebuild' the capacity of the State Department and USAID; some US\$200 million has been allocated for HE. As part of the US\$25 million for the HEA program, US\$15 million is to cover the expansion of partnerships between US and African institutions. It is anticipated that this will come under the existing Africa-US Higher Education Initiative. National and regional development priorities are seen as the underlying objectives. Reciprocal benefits to internationalising US institutions or curricula are also recognised, as well as the profile given to the US HE system internationally.

The UK's DFID Education Strategy 2010-2015, published in March, makes the connection to wider development goals more explicit, arguing that the 'public financing of higher education should be targeted toward those skills most needed to achieve the MDGs'. One of the projects exemplified is the DeLPHE (Development Partnerships for Higher Education) programme. Due to run until 2013, DeLPHE is aimed at DFID's 22 focus countries, including several in Commonwealth Africa and Asia. Health, education, agriculture, and environment-related projects predominate. DeLPHE (which the ACU helps co-ordinate) concentrates on enabling HEIs 'to act as catalysts for poverty reduction and sustainable development', aiming to strengthen institutions with specific reference to the MDGs and science/technology-related skills. A recently-published case studies report notes that 68% of its projects so far have been led by African HEIs.

From a European perspective the European University Association (EUA) is currently co-ordinating an EC-funded project – 'Access to Success: Fostering Trust and Exchange between Europe and Africa'. It aims to bring together universities from both regions to 'build a framework for sustainable higher education dialogue'. The project's specific themes are access and retention, institutional capacity-building, and student/staff mobility. Its most recent meeting (Oslo, February 2010), focused on the need for greater co-ordination between existing European national strategies and programmes which currently support co-operation, motivated in part by the platform which the EU-Africa Summit will offer later this year. One conclusion of an earlier 'Dialogue Meeting' was the need for 'enhanced dialogue, exchange and cooperation' to counter claims that pressures on resources could be used to justify a reduced role for European universities in the 'global South'.

Despite the development of various partnership schemes with African institutions, the trend towards links with Asia, often focusing on countries seen as sources of international students or potential branch-campus sites, is growing too. In the UK ministerial-level meetings were held in January leading to a memorandum of understanding between UK and Indian universities 'pledging to foster more successful partnerships in higher education and research'. In Canada the AUCC hosted a symposium ('Cardinal Points: How North-South Partnerships Support Internationalization Strategies'), and a good practice guide to student recruitment from India was released. The US-based IIE has reflected a similar focus in publishing 'International India: A

Turning Point in Educational Exchange with the U.S.', as well as launching a Center for International Partnerships in Higher Education (India and China are the countries on which it will initially concentrate).

In parallel China and India are also expanding their own academic links with Africa. The Forum on Africa-China Co-operation last November announced commitments to a new 20+20 Cooperation Plan, an increase in Chinese scholarships (totalling 5,500 by 2012), and support for a Science and Technology Partnership Plan. China also aims to 'develop a new strategy for health assistance to Africa'. Finally, following the 2008 India-Africa Forum Summit, the African Union and the Indian government launched in March an Action Plan which, within an overall commitment to promote the growth of African HE, envisages the creation of an African Institute for Education Planning & Administration and an African Institute for Information Technology, in addition to 10 vocational training centres. Host countries will be identified by the AU while India will provide technical support. It follows, indirectly, from the involvement of India's IIT Bombay in the establishment of the first African Institute of Science and Technology in Abuja, Nigeria (see VC-Net 81).

The growth of academic partnerships globally reflects an HE sector which is increasingly internationalised. With inevitable differences in the needs and interests of institutions worldwide the motives for such links vary. Development, institutional capacity, and training needs contrast with competition for students, faculty recruitment, and branch campuses. But the growth of more research-oriented exchanges with institutions in Asia, and the parallel development of Asia to Africa partnerships, suggests the value of wider and more interdependent links, not only between institutions but also between 'donor' countries. In addition despite the support and influence which they offer, the proliferation of various overlapping HE partnerships brings its own challenges. The management alone of such links could involve a considerable administrative burden, particularly for African universities with limited infrastructure and human resources.

Sources:

- Africa-US Higher Education Initiative www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1446
- HED; USAID *Higher Education Partnerships in Sub-Saharan Africa: an Impact Assessment of 12 Higher Education Partnerships* www.hedprogram.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=cYMtOKjvllw%3d&tabid=60
- *Learning for All: DFID's Education Strategy: 2010-2015* www.dfid.gov.uk
- DelPHE *Celebrating DelPHE Success/DelPHE Case Studies* www.britishcouncil.org/delphe-celebrating-success.htm?mtklink=delphe-annual-report-homepage-mt-link
- Access to Success project www.accesstosuccess-africa.eu/web
- IIE (Center for International Partnerships in Higher Education)
- www.iie.org/en/Who-We-Are/News-and-Events/Press-Center/Press-Releases/2009/2009-10-16-IIE-Launches-Center-for-International-Partnerships
- Forum on Africa-China Co-operation www.focac.org/eng/zxxx/t626387.htm
- China (International Roundtable on China-Africa Health Collaboration)
- <http://go.worldbank.org/WW84SGFAU0>
- Action Plan of the Framework for Co-operation of the Africa-India Forum www.africa-union.org [press release accessible from homepage]

Higher education for post-conflict transformation?

Arguments for the role of higher education in post-conflict recovery are heard with greater frequency, particularly as the sector is increasingly tasked with demonstrating broader 'developmental' relevance in financially-constrained and politically-challenged contexts. That the education system can play a critical part in fostering values and cultures of tolerance and understanding is justifiably emphasized by many in the sector, and is a theme common to several partnership initiatives (eg NUFU, DelPHE). But more prosaically perhaps, it is through addressing acute skills shortages in key areas (eg in the delivery of essential public services), expanding and improving educational and training opportunities (and routes into employment) for youth, and tackling underlying issues of social and economic disparity through research and teaching, that its post-conflict role is most tangibly seen.

Recent World Bank work in Sri Lanka strongly emphasizes the part which HE must play in the country's recovery and transformation after many years of civil conflict – with a mission to help Sri Lanka rise from lower to middle income status. The intertwined needs of economic growth and peace and security were articulated through the 2009 report 'Towers of Learning: Performance, Peril and Promise of Higher Education in Sri Lanka' (VC-Net 90) but also more recently in a new 'Higher Education for the 21st Century Project' (HECP). While the report and project note reflect the Bank's typical concern with the economic value of tertiary education, and marshals familiar arguments – with a strong focus on graduate skills, labour market relevance, industry linkages, and an emphasis on quality – it notably tasks the Sri Lankan tertiary system with 'inspir[ing] the country's values, ethics and social institutions' and argues that the project will

'directly and explicitly support the Bank's agenda to address the causes and the consequences of the conflict in Sri Lanka'.

The HECP, funded through a US\$40 million loan from the International Development Association (IDA) is due to be approved later this month; the appraisal document released last December sets out its principal objectives and the mechanisms to achieve these. It builds on both government and World Bank studies of the country's needs, is deliberately aligned to the government's own policy framework, and was developed on the basis of consultation across the sector. It anticipates that Sri Lanka's economic future will 'depend on knowledge-intensive activities' such as banking and finance, insurance, ICT and hospitality; graduates are currently ill-prepared to meet these needs as a result of the quality of existing programmes, weak industry linkages, and a mismatch between degree programmes and the needs of potential employers. The need to strengthen institutions and expand access in the country's neglected Eastern and Northern regions is repeatedly emphasized; it specifically notes that for public services to be improved there is a considerable need for training more graduates. It also seeks to tackle the lack of policy coherence and quality control across the system, which is currently split between traditional universities and the 'alternative sector' of advanced technical institutes.

Governance interventions, developing greater public-private partnerships, and diversifying funding sources are noted as key to improving quality, relevance, and delivery. Specific programme areas and mechanisms are identified as a new unified qualification framework to cover the full tertiary system; a series of competitive 'university development grants' to support IT and soft skills development, with 'quality and innovation grants' to support curriculum reform, teaching and learning modernization, industry links and employability-focused activities; targeted support to assist advanced technological institutes, and academic, management and leadership training; and an expansion of monitoring and evaluation capacities.

The HECP follows two recent Bank projects in Pakistan and Bangladesh (VC-Net 89 & 91), addressing common issues of quality and governance in the region, while it has also just announced a US\$1.05 billion investment in Indian education, focusing on quality, of which US\$300 million will go to support technical and engineering education at tertiary level. The HECP itself extends another Bank project in Sri Lanka (IRQUE) designed to improve undergraduate quality, suggesting that this has been well received; it also arrives at the same time as a US\$12.8 million loan from the Asian Development Bank for Sri Lanka's post-conflict recovery which will also offer some support to education.

At a regional level, these investments suggest a strong focus on two areas, skills and quality, as well as a recognition that parallel support is needed for both the university and the technical sub-sectors.

Although commonly emphasized, detailed analyses of the impact of HE in post-conflict recovery, outside of their contributions to national growth, can be hard to locate. The ACU's next Conference of Executive Heads in April 2010 will address this question through sessions examining the part that universities have played in Sri Lanka, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Fiji and Northern Ireland. <http://capetown2010.acu.ac.uk>

Sources:

- World Bank: *Higher Education for the 21st Century Project* (project appraisal, authorised 22/12/09 with final approval expected 30/3/10): <http://go.worldbank.org/P7XQIS8SP0>
- World Bank: *The Towers of Learning: Performance, Peril and Promise of Higher Education in Sri Lanka*: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/Publications/TOLreportfinal.pdf>
- Ministry of Higher Education, Sri Lanka: http://www.mohe.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=76&Itemid=100
- World Bank (US\$1.5 billion to improve education in India) <http://go.worldbank.org/C3QHXTX9K0>

Defining academic freedom

The varying but growing pressures on academic freedom are represented by a series of recent publications and commitments. Their interests and emphases reflect the range of contexts in which universities operate, but they also show how that freedom is being redefined in the context of wider higher education trends.

In February Unesco published 'Education under Attack' to raise awareness of targeted violence and threats to education staff and institutions worldwide. The focus is on schools but it also briefly refers to higher education, recommending in conclusion the creation of a central source where 'data, research and reports on attacks on education can be gathered and made public'. With reference to universities it quotes from a separate 2009 survey, 'perhaps the first detailed global analysis of the motives behind attacks on higher

education'. Political involvement, commitment to human rights, beliefs, identity, and status, are the apparent pretexts for such attacks.

In the US an online journal was launched at the beginning of the year: the AAUP Journal of Academic Freedom, responding to the fact that 'there is no one place to track the developing international discussion about academic freedom and its collateral issues'. Its emphasis is on freedom as it relates to 'shared governance, tenure, and collective bargaining', reflecting both the AAUP's historic principles and its long-standing representation of academic staff interests. The first issue includes studies of past challenges to academic freedom, especially the tests resulting in earlier changes to governance structures. It is, appropriately, freely available online and will also therefore be more readily seen as contributing to - as well as representing - wider international debate.

UniversitiesUK has established a working group of VCs and other academics to consider 'how universities can best protect academic freedom and freedom of speech on campus under contemporary conditions of geo-political conflict, racial and religious tension and violent extremism'. The aim is to co-ordinate views from UK universities 'to provide a basis for enhancing sector information on these important areas, for circulation later this year'. The working group was set up following the attempted terrorist bombing of a US flight last December; the university from where the alleged bomber graduated is also undertaking its own independent enquiry to 'explore how far there were at that time - and/or today - conditions at UCL that might contribute to the radicalisation of students'. In this context recent debate has related to freedom of speech and intellectual freedom both for students and visiting speakers, the autonomy of universities, and the 'monitoring' of extremism.

More widely, increasing pressure on universities for their staff and research to be more accountable, to contribute more to institutional income, to compete for external research contracts, the shifting allocation of responsibilities amongst staff, and concerns over job security as budgets are cut, have also become identified with issues of academic freedom, autonomy, and rights.

The identification of academic freedom with human rights and freedom of expression, to more general concerns over the protection of faculty interests in work and pay, confirm the new pressures on higher education institutions internationally. Indirectly it reinforces a sense of universities' status and what they stand for as well as reflecting the new expectations placed on them. Redefining academic freedom also follows wider trends in HE, particularly the changes which ICT has introduced, not only in the circulation of ideas, but also how interests are represented and the authority of academic expertise guaranteed.

Sources:

- Unesco – *Education under Attack 2010*: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001868/186809e.pdf>
- AAUP Journal of Academic Freedom: www.academicfreedomjournal.org/
- UUK Working Group: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Newsroom/Media-Releases/Pages/Update1workinggroup.aspx
- UCL review: www.ucl.ac.uk/news/news-articles/1002/10022403;
www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=409807&c=2

Other news

India

NCHER

A draft bill for the **National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER)** has been released (2/10) outlining its potential role in incorporating the UGC, AICTE, and the NCTE. The new regulatory body will specify academic quality requirements for an HE institution and its qualifications, advise on establishing universities, and maintain a 'national registry' of those 'eligible and qualified for appointment' as VCs/institutional heads. It also aims to 'monitor, through a national database' related academic quality issues [see VC-NET 90] (www.education.nic.in/UHE/NCHERAct-2010.pdf).

A Foreign Educational Institution (Regulation of Entry and Operation) Bill, which aims to regulate international universities operating in India, has also recently been approved (www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=410951&c=1)

UK

HE Funding

In recent months a series of announcements have been made indicating the level of anticipated funding cuts in the UK's higher education sector (see VC-NET 92). In addition to required 'efficiency savings' of £180m, budget reductions of £600m, further cuts of £135m were announced at the end of last year, though an

additional £270m has since been made available through a Higher Education Modernisation Fund. Debate has continued not only on the anticipated effect of these, but also the contrasting policy of investment in HE systems elsewhere internationally.

(www.hefce.ac.uk); (www.universitiesuk.ac.uk); (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/8476136.stm>)

ACU (Secretary-General)

The ACU has appointed Professor John Wood as the new Secretary General replacing Professor John Tarrant on his retirement this summer. Professor Wood, currently Senior International Relations Adviser to Imperial College London, studied at the universities of Sheffield and Cambridge, has held posts at the Open University and the University of Nottingham and is a former Chief Executive of the Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils. He was elected Chair of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) in 2005 and was recently elected Chair of the Board of Trustees of the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP). Professor Wood will take up his post on 1 July 2010.

Key publications

A selection of recent publications on higher education:

- **International India: A Turning Point in Educational Exchange with the U.S** (Global Education Research Reports series, 3) [IIE; 2010 (www.iiebooks.org/uhiedex.html)]. Internationalisation policy, government and institutional strategies to support HE partnerships, and wider connections with business and migration, are among the topics of this AIFS Foundation-sponsored study.
- **Legal Frameworks for Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Quest for Institutional Responsiveness** (World Bank Working Paper, 175 (Africa Human Development Series) [Saint, W.; Lao, C.; Materu, P.; 978-0-8213-8124-3; World Bank; 2009 (http://publications.worldbank.org/ecommerce/catalog/product?item_id=9350280)] (Also related article, by same author, in 'Higher Education Policy' (22:4) (Dec 09))
- **Legal Frameworks for Higher Education Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa** (www.palgrave-journals.com/hep/journal/v22/n4/abs/hep200917a.html)
Analysis and comparison of current governance arrangements and trends in Sub-Saharan Africa as represented by national tertiary education legislation and selected university statutes.
- **Measuring Success in the Internationalisation of Higher Education** (EAIE Occasional Paper, 22) [De Wit, H. (ed.); 978-90-74721-30-1; 2009; EAIE (www.eaie.org) (www.che.de/downloads/measuring_internationalisation_EAIE_Occasional_Papers_22v6.pdf)]
An overview of how internationalisation is variously assessed, how it is linked to recent trends in ranking and joint degrees, and institutional/regional case studies.
- **Recruiting International Students in India: a Good Practices Guidebook** [AUCC; 978-0-88876-286-0; 2010 (www.aucc.ca/publications/aucppubs/recruitment_guidebook_e.html)]
Representative case studies with recommendations and advice on marketing, education agents, visas, applications, and student counselling.
- **The Higher Education Workforce Framework** [HEFCE; 2010 (www.hefce.ac.uk/news/HEFCE/2010/workforce.htm)]
One of a series of reports on employment in the UK HE sector issued in February. Related HR management, future workforce needs/provision, and trends in HE employees, are reviewed.
- **Trends: 2010: a Decade of Change in European Higher Education** [Sursock, A; Smidt, H.; 978-907-8997177; 2010 EUA (European University Association) (www.eua.be/publications/#c399)]
A review of the effect of (Bologna Process) reforms on higher education in Europe since 2002, within the context of wider change in the sector.

Directories

- **Handbook: Universities of Bangladesh 2009** [University Grants Commission of Bangladesh; 984-300-002699-8; 2009 (www.ugc.gov.bd/book_publications)]
A directory and guide to the universities in Bangladesh: public, private, and international, with summaries of the UGC's role and the country's HE sector.
- **The East African Universities Year Book** [Inter-University Council for East Africa; 2009 (www.iucea.org)]
Profiles of university institutions with brief histories, statistics, course titles, and staff lists. Covers Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

- **Universities Handbook** [Association of Indian Universities; 2010 (www.aiuweb.org)]
Biennial 2-volume directory (32nd) profiling Indian universities, with brief course details and staff lists.

Journal

- **The Round Table: the Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs (Issue 405 (Dec 2009)): Special Issue: Distinctiveness and Diversity: 50 Years of Commonwealth Co-operation in Education** [Williams, P.; Lee, M. (eds.); 0035-8533; Routledge (Taylor & Francis) (www.tandf.co.uk/journals/CTRT)
Includes a review article –'Commonwealth Scholarships: Advancing Cosmopolitanism for 50 years' (Shaw, T.; Jobbins, D.)

The authors, Nick Mulhern and Jonathan Harle, are always pleased to receive comments on the usefulness and content of this briefing. News from other Commonwealth countries, which might be of wider interest, is also most welcome. They can be contacted by e-mail on vcnet@acu.ac.uk or by fax on +44 (0)20 7387 2655. This and previous issues can also be accessed online at:
www.acu.ac.uk/member_services/research_and_policy_analysis/vc_net
