

# 'A Changing Landscape'

## *Making support to tertiary education and research in developing countries more effective*

The Hague, 23-25 May 2005

Venue:

Atlantic Hotel, Delataplein 200, Kijkduin

The Hague

### **Introduction**

There is a general consensus about the important role that tertiary education plays within the education system as a whole in producing high-calibre capacity for national development and in stimulating democratic processes. The World Bank report 'Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education' (World Bank, 2002) signalled renewed interest in support for tertiary education in developing countries. The UNESCO/World Bank Task Force on tertiary education concluded in its 2000 report 'Peril and Promise' that without more and better tertiary education, developing countries will find it increasingly difficult to benefit from the global knowledge based economy.

Although overshadowed by the interest in primary education for many years, support for tertiary education and research never disappeared from the agendas of many bilateral donors. Most bilateral programmes for strengthening teaching and research capacity in developing countries and fellowships programmes that existed ten years ago are still in operation today, the majority with comparable levels of funding at their disposal and comparable policies.

New developments in tertiary education provide a changing backdrop to traditional programmes. In order to capture the dynamics of new developments and to learn from experience with support programmes, Nuffic took the initiative of organising an international meeting at which experts would discuss recent experiences with international cooperation, and the challenges which national governments and institutes face in the context of rapidly changing conditions and opportunities. In a single sentence, the aim of 'A Changing Landscape' was to learn from these views and experiences and to analyse opportunities in order to make support for tertiary education and research in developing countries more effective.

The conference took place from 23-25 May 2005 at the Atlantic Hotel in Kijkduin, The Hague, the Netherlands. The conference was divided into two linked events. The first was a two-day Expert Meeting where 70 international experts (policymakers, managers, academics, students and experts in technical assistance) from the South and the North engaged in a debate on the experiences and insights they had gathered over the years. All the participants in the Expert Meeting had been invited to contribute a paper. Some 40 papers were received. These papers were made available to the participants prior to the conference.

The second event, a half-day Plenary Session, involved presenting and discussing the outcomes of the Expert Meeting with a broader audience composed of representatives of Dutch government departments, research agencies, higher education institutes and European programme administration organizations. During this session an interactive method was applied to brief the new guests on the outcome of the previous days, and to validate the key themes and recommendations, as determined during the Expert Meeting.

The conference was organized by Ad Boeren and Hans Maltha of the Department for Human Resource and Institutional Development at Nuffic and Ms Bianca Hummel of the International Marketing and Communication Department at Nuffic. They received very welcome support before and during the conference from various colleagues in both departments. Special mention should be made of the contributions of Ms Elly Stevens, who took care of flight arrangements for the guests from abroad, Ms Ligia Rocha, in charge of financial matters, and Wietse Bruinsma and David Wubs who recorded the outcomes of the discussion groups and plenary sessions and compiled the draft proceedings of the conference.

The conference was facilitated by Dr Han Rakels of Kirin Consultancy and Ms Tamara Sutilla. HAASVideo made audiovisual recordings of the plenary afternoon session on 25 May. Serge Ligtenberg took the pictures.

This publication presents the outcomes of the conference in terms of the insights exchanged, the recommendations formulated and the wealth of papers contributed by participants. Because of the volume of papers received, Nuffic decided not to make a selection to be included in a publication of manageable proportions, but to include all papers on a CD-ROM.



The views and recommendations contained in the papers and exchanged during the conference have been summarized in the 'Overview papers'. Throughout the conference an attempt was made to distinguish between the perceptions of different stakeholder groups. These represent three visions, that of governments and institutes in the South, that of institutes and researchers in the North, and that of donor agencies and programme administrators. Consequently, the distinction between these three perspectives has been maintained in this publication.

'Towards effective support to higher education and research in developing countries' can be regarded as the executive summary of the publication. It brings together the main findings, conclusions and recommendations in the overview papers that follow. 'International dimensions of higher education systems in developing countries' presents an analysis of the contents of the papers and discussions during the conference from a Southern perspective, i.e. the governments and institutes in developing countries. In 'Mechanisms to support higher education and research in developing countries' the views and experiences of a number of donors and programme administrators are analyzed. These experiences to a large extent consist of outcomes of external reviews and evaluations of a number of international cooperation and fellowship programmes. 'Northern perspectives on development cooperation in higher education and research' analyzes the theme of the conference from a Northern perspective, bringing together the views and experiences of Northern academics, managers of universities and development practitioners.

What actually happened during the conference and what was discussed are reported in the Proceedings of the conference. The proceedings conclude with a number of recommendations on five thematic topics which were given priority during the expert meeting sessions of the conference:

- quality assurance and enhancement of education and research systems
- international partnerships and networking between institutes
- establishment of regional centres of excellence
- improved donor coordination
- flexible support programmes

The contributions of several Nuffic staff members to the organization of the conference have been acknowledged above. Those who have not been mentioned by name have certainly not been forgotten. A final word of thanks should go to Ms Ingrid van der Elst for putting together the CD-ROM and Ms Elma Leidekker, who coordinated the production process for both publication and CD-ROM. The text of the publication was reviewed by Ms Annette Mills and Chris Hopley.

The editors