

# Mechanisms to support higher education and research in developing countries

The perspective of donors and programme administrators

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## 1 Introduction

This paper brings together the views, experiences and lessons learned as set out in the proceedings of the conference and the papers submitted by representatives of donor agencies (development partners) and programme administering organizations. Six donor agencies<sup>1</sup> submitted papers and five programme administering organizations<sup>2</sup>. The overview also draws on the background paper prepared by Nuffic (Boeren & Maltha), the paper by Boeren analyzing the evaluation of a number of international cooperation programmes, and the paper prepared by de Gast which discusses similarities and differences in the policies and programmes of donor agencies in twelve countries. Added to the stock of papers is one which Ad Boeren prepared in the spring of 2004, entitled 'A matter of interests: perspectives on international cooperation in tertiary education', which analyses the policy and administrative frameworks of a small number of Northern European donor programmes (Boeren 2004).

This overview consists of three sections. The first section is devoted to issues which relate to the policy frameworks in which international cooperation programmes in higher education and research operate and issues which relate to the interface between policy principles, strategies and the set-up of programmes. The second section deals with the various dimensions of programme modalities or support mechanisms. It describes the extent to which donor programmes differ in their set-up, administration and implementation and how can this be related to different views on international cooperation. The third section brings together the experiences and lessons learned from a number of cooperation and fellowship programmes.

## 2 Policy issues

### 2.1 Introduction

The papers submitted by representatives of donor agencies and programme administering organizations dwell hardly at all on the question of how development cooperation policies regarding higher education and research are formulated and to what extent external influences play a role in the formulation or reformulation of these policies. They do, however, discuss policy issues, highlighting different aspects. Some of them focus on the evolution of policies and programmes over the years, others discuss attempts to create a better synergy between development policies, strategies and programmes, nationally as well as internationally. When the various contributions in the papers and the discussions during the conference are reviewed, the following policy issues come to the fore:

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<sup>1</sup> The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), the Danish International Development Agency (Danida), the Dutch Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGIS), four private American foundations united in the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, and the Ford Foundation (International Fellowship Programme).

<sup>2</sup> The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the British Council UK (BC), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU).

- the need to support higher education and research;
- internal consistency of development policy frameworks and strategies;
- synergy between national and international development programmes; and
- the road to donor coordination.

These issues will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

## *2.2 The need to support higher education and research*

Higher education and research in developing countries have been supported by donor agencies for many decades. In the sixties, the role of the universities as an important driver in the development of newly independent countries was widely acknowledged. The universities had to produce the know-how and necessary manpower to initiate and feed development processes in the various sectors. For these reasons most donors supported the strengthening of the universities and university staff in developing countries.

In the eighties, it became fashionable to look at development cooperation from an economic perspective and to investigate which type of investments would have the greatest effect on development processes. This approach led to a major interest in primary education, as studies at that time pointed out that the economic rate of return on investment in primary education was higher than in the other stages of the education system, especially secondary education. As a consequence, since the early nineties, donor contributions to primary education have shown a tremendous increase, while those to higher education dwindled, or at best remained at the same level.

This situation lasted until the early years of the third millennium, when two World Bank reports<sup>3</sup> put higher education and research back on the agenda of donor agencies and governments. The two reports have had a profound impact on the visions, policies and practices of all donor countries and agencies. They successfully advocated that a well-functioning higher education system considered a necessary condition for economic and other development, but institution and capacity building in general are acknowledged as prime goals of development cooperation.

The arguments in favour of supporting the higher education and research sectors in developing countries from a social and economic perspective have remained the same over the years. What is new is that universities are seen as an integral part of the education system, in which they play an indispensable role in ensuring the quality of the other sub-systems.

Among the conference participants there was general agreement that support for primary education and higher education should be approached from a holistic perspective. This will lead to improvement of the education sector as a whole, and at the same time to a more balanced allocation of available government and donor funds to the sub-sectors. However, one thing is clear: there is a strong imbalance between the available resources and the number of institutes that need support.

A number of the donors present at the conference focus on supporting research capacity. By developing research capacity a knowledge base is created for problem-solving and for the identification, design and implementation of other aid instruments and development policies

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<sup>3</sup> The Task Force on Higher Education and Society, "Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise", The World Bank (2000); Richard Hooper (ed), "Constructing knowledge societies: new challenges for tertiary education", the World Bank (2002).

(Ilsøe: 1). Developing countries need to develop the capacity to set their own priorities and take responsibility for their own development. One important tool for achieving this is to develop national and regional innovation systems and viable tertiary education that relates to economic growth and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Steen & Heen: 2).

The fact that many donors have continued to support higher education and research is interesting and can be explained by two factors: 1) donors have never failed to see the importance of higher education and research for development, despite the interest in primary education, and 2) support for higher education and research in developing countries also served interests at home.

The first point of view is for example embodied in the Scandinavian research cooperation programmes and the programmes of the American foundations (e.g. Ford). The Ford Foundation, one of the major private foundations in the United States, has since the late 1950s supported universities and research centres in Africa, Asia, and Latin America in strengthening their institutional capacity in disciplines and fields considered critical for development, such as agriculture, economics, education and the social sciences. Support for advanced training at postgraduate level – both in developing countries and regions as well as in the North – has long been a major component of the Foundation's work (Dassin: 1).

On the other hand, some donors are of the opinion that supporting higher education development in the South is not only important for developing countries, but equally important for their own higher education sector, and for building good international relations. According to Beland,

*“Higher education and the exchange of ideas, people and knowledge can bring a critical human dimension to foreign policy. Indeed, as the need for a more sophisticated approach to international relations and for strong partnerships becomes more pressing, the influence that comes with knowledge cannot be underestimated.”* (p.10)

Countries like Norway, Belgium, Canada and Australia aim to offer their national universities the opportunity to participate in development activities, to maintain and expand expertise in development issues, to keep them committed, and to help them in their efforts to internationalize their programmes. Fellowship programmes are a particularly suitable instrument for providing Northern institutes with the opportunity to internationalize their curricula. In giving foreign students the chance to come and study at their institutes, they are obliged to offer international courses which conform to international quality standards. The Norwegian, Belgian and German scholarship and fellowship programmes, but also the institutional cooperation programmes, are clear exponents of so-called multi-purpose programmes. The programmes not only serve development goals but also academic and institutional interests at home.

However, according to some papers it is becoming difficult to keep the Northern institutes interested in development cooperation. In a number of Northern countries universities' interest in engaging in development cooperation activities is waning. The pressure of globalization, budget cuts and changing conditions for participation in development cooperation programmes feed this process. Academic staff are assessed on the basis of their scientific output ('publish or perish'), which may prevent them from undertaking development-related activities which may be extremely valuable but are very time-consuming and do not lead to publications in internationally refereed journals.

The forces of globalization and the internationalization of education are forcing institutes in the North to position themselves as centres of excellence that will attract staff and students. Only on that basis will they be able to survive academically and financially. In that respect the focus lies at present more on forging strategic alliances with quality partners in the North than on working together with weak partners in the South; more on attracting students from all over the world who can pay for their own studies than on training staff members from their partners in the South (Boeren 2004: 8).

The importance attached to the internationalization of national institutes also may have unintended negative consequences for partners in developing countries. Since one of the main goals is to increase the number of students from other countries, there may be not sufficient incentives to support the establishment of courses in partner countries and to support training in the South, which should be a priority for development cooperation policy. According to Steen & Heen (p. 18), this represents a potential conflict of agendas.

Another form of pressure comes from changes in funding mechanisms for higher education institutes. Funding schemes are increasingly becoming output-based and are mainly linked to the number of completed degrees at institutes. This does not give these institutes sufficient incentive to collaborate with universities in developing countries through a sandwich model, where the aim is to get a student to take the final degree in his/her own country (Steen & Heen, p. 17).

Under these conditions it seems that only institutes with staff time 'to spare' and a policy that defines international cooperation with institutes in the South as an integral part of the institute's mandate will be able and willing to embark on partnership programmes without demanding immediate returns on investments. The principle of institutes contributing staff time for free is increasingly difficult to uphold, especially when the returns are minimal or long term (Boeren 2004: 8).

If, however, governments and institutes in Northern countries consider it important for higher education institutes and research organizations to build up and maintain expertise for development cooperation and development research, ways must be found to make this happen. In Norway and the United Kingdom the national ministries of education acknowledge the fact that development cooperation should be part of the regular tasks of the higher education institutes. The Norwegian Ministry of Education has decided that development cooperation is one of the tasks of higher education institutes, which means that the institutes have to devote time and resources to this end. And in the United Kingdom, the Department of Education has been emphasizing the contribution which higher education makes to development, and the way in which the sector might help the South to strengthen its lifelong learning provision. Powell (p. 2) welcomes this change in attitude and comments that

*"...a few years ago it would have been almost unthinkable that a Department of Education would be setting forward its priorities on areas which would have been seen as the exclusive concern of international development."*

### *2.3 Coherence of development policy frameworks and strategies*

The conference participants raised the question of how to make the fairly implicit link between support for higher education, poverty reduction and the MDGs more explicit. Clear answers to this question were not forthcoming, but the development cooperation partners were very much aware of the importance of higher education in poverty reduction and sustainable development. The following reasons were given: a) higher education plays an important role in strengthening governance; b) it is important for the generation of knowledge; c) all poverty

reduction programmes need well trained staff and d) higher education and research provide developing countries access to a vast international pool of knowledge.

The difficulty of making the link between support to higher education, poverty reduction and MDGs more explicit lies in the problem of combining an overall objective with specific objectives which are not easy to balance. In programmes which are designed to strengthen universities in developing countries the direct link with poverty reduction is difficult to establish, unless projects focus on themes and disciplines which have a direct relation with poverty reduction. A narrow concentration on such themes may be at odds with the objective of the programme (to strengthen the Southern institutes).

It is a dilemma which relates to the broader donor challenge of creating internal coherence within policy frameworks and consistency between policy objectives, strategies and programmes. Inconsistencies between policies occur because they are developed for different, often specific, purposes at different points in time with different stakeholders. Inconsistencies within development cooperation programmes are sometimes difficult to avoid when these programmes have to accommodate various political and economic interests.

Programmes which have more than one specific objective usually have an in-built tension between development objectives and other, more national, objectives. The national objectives may include promoting the national higher education sector (as is the case in the German DAAD scholarships), internationalizing the national higher education sector (e.g. the Norwegian fellowship programmes), or strengthening and maintaining a knowledge base on development-related issues in the country (e.g. the Norwegian and Belgian cooperation programmes). The involvement of institutes in the donor country in training provision or the implementation of cooperation projects comes at a price. Participation means influence on programme matters and co-ownership of the programme, especially when it also involves joint financing of programme activities.

The strength of these so-called cofunding arrangements is their capacity to mobilize resources from other sources. In Canada, universities have brought nearly \$90 million dollars in financial and in-kind contributions to the CIDA-funded UPCD programme<sup>4</sup> since its inception in 1994. This amount represents a cost-sharing contribution of over 40% per project, 10% more than the required 30% cost-sharing requirement (Beland: 8).

Shared commitments are possible as long as there is a sufficiently close match between academic and development objectives. As Powell puts it:

*“Higher education institutes are not in business to deliver on the MDGs but they are committed to North-South partnerships which fulfil their own global mission and also to joint research which enriches their knowledge and research base through field work.”* (p. 5)

The dimensions of the dilemma are clearly described in the paper by Ilsøe (pp.11-12) which refers to the Danish situation.

*“There is a dilemma of wanting to maintain the Northern national research resource base while trying to secure a demand-driven and poverty focus and giving more ownership to Southern partners. The dilemma described in the ENRECA<sup>5</sup> evaluation of giving more Southern ownership without undermining the enthusiasm from the Danish participants, is still valid. Trying to fit in all the (conflicting) objectives in one project approach is not the*

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<sup>4</sup> University Partnership in Cooperation and Development

<sup>5</sup> Danida's Bilateral Programme for Enhancement of Research capacity in Developing Countries

*solution. The Danish programmes distinguish between the research and the research capacity building objectives and have set up the project typology accordingly, as described, with different sets of objectives and selection criteria for each type of project.”*

At the conference, this dilemma was deemed a major challenge for donors and administrators. Particularly in Northern Europe, donors are struggling to increase the developmental focus of cooperation and fellowship programmes without completely losing the cooperation of the Northern institutes. The solutions are not easy to find.

In the Netherlands, the government decided that development goals should take precedence in international cooperation programmes in higher education and consequently changed the role of Dutch institutes in the programmes from partner to that of service provider. This ended the co-ownership of Dutch programmes which had characterized them until then (see section ‘*Administrative arrangement*’ below for details of the reorganization process). Since then the Dutch institutes have openly questioned their participation in the new programmes.

In the Norwegian, Danish and UK programmes attempts are made to improve the balance between bilateral development aims and partnership conditionalities. The British government had plans to terminate the Higher Education Links Scheme (HELs), not because it was unsuccessful, but because it did not tally with the government’s other development cooperation policies. According to Powell (p. 5), the UK higher education institutes have nevertheless been vociferous in their commitment to HELs and its continuation. They do not receive any direct funding from the Department for International Development (DfID) but the international travel and accommodation costs for UK staff are covered by the overseas institute from its DfID grant. The estimated investment by the higher education institute in staff time and equipment far outweighs the DfID contribution. This makes the UK higher education sector the major stakeholder and funding partner of the programme. It has now been decided that there will be a follow-up to HELs, albeit under a new name and with new parameters. Because of the shared commitment, the UK higher education sector will play a role in the design of the programme.

## *2.4 Synergy between national and international development programmes*

A major challenge for all donors is to create better coherence and synergy between the programmes they fund: multilateral programmes, bilateral sector programmes, bilateral institutional cooperation programmes, research (cooperation) programmes, TA projects, scholarship and fellowship programmes. This relates not only to complementary use of institutional cooperation programmes and fellowship programmes, but also to complementary use of cooperation programmes in higher education with sector programmes in higher education.

It seems fair to state that better coherence between institutional cooperation programmes in higher education can be achieved in two ways: a) an effective combination of separate programmes (*synergy*), or b) integration of separate programme modalities into one ‘umbrella programme’ (*modularity*). Either way it should be possible to support a sector, an institute or an individual with tailor-made and *à la carte* support modalities according to specific needs and circumstances. It would take the demand-led principle of programme policies one step further.

During the conference the need for flexible programmes and the flexible use of programmes was discussed at great length by the representatives of the programme administration organizations. They agreed that it should be possible to combine cooperation and training opportunities offered by different donor agencies. At the same time it would be beneficial to

integrate institutional development, scholarship modalities, follow-up activities and research opportunities to maximize impact. They also agreed that ideally synergy between modalities should be based on strategic plans at institutional, national, and even international level.

In the end, they formulated the following recommendation:

*“Fellowships to be integrated in institutional development resulting in one programme with different modalities (à la carte) in order to address the needs of governments, institutes, and individuals within higher education development in the South.”*

Realizing these ambitions will not be easy. Donors have an array of programmes of varying sizes which are administered in different ways, sometimes by various administrators and which are seldom used in a synergetic manner.

Synergy between programmes can be achieved at three levels – policy, administration and implementation – but should be promoted at all levels, from all angles. Steen & Heen describe the contours of the new Norwegian Strategy for Support to Higher Education and Research in Tanzania, which aims to enhance coherence between various support mechanisms at national level. In 2004 it was generally agreed that cooperation between Norway and three Tanzanian universities should be re-oriented in order to focus more directly upon relevance to the country’s own development priorities and quality assurance.

*“As in the past, support to the universities will be designed to fit into the Universities’ own strategies. It is also the intention to have an even closer collaboration between the support to higher education and research through NUFU programme and NFP and the general country programme to increase the impact of the Norwegian support to the sector.”* (Steen & Heen: 16).

This example from Tanzania seems to indicate that the most effective way to achieve complementary use of different modalities requires a bottom-up approach. In the case of Tanzania the country’s own development priorities form the basis for coherent use of various support mechanisms. But the starting point could also be the development plan of an institute and granting this institute a free hand in combining various support mechanisms to serve its specific needs and ambitions. These could be provided by one donor or by different donors.

Achieving greater coherence between programmes at policy level is often a long-term endeavour with an uncertain outcome. In an attempt to encourage synergy between programmes at administrative level, the administration of various programmes is concentrated in the hands of one organization. This model is common practice in Norway and the Netherlands. However, these arrangements do not automatically lead to more synergy unless the programmes are designed to be used in a complementary way (Boeren: 29-30).

## *2.5 The road to donor coordination*

Donor coordination is another topic which has featured on the development agenda for a very long time. Although it has become a serious issue at the overall development cooperation level, it is hardly visible in higher education development. In principle, each donor runs its own programmes, irrespective of the programmes of other donors.

What the donor community has achieved to date is a convergence of thinking on a number of important policy issues. All donor policies are now focused on poverty reduction and realization of the MDGs. Since the Jomtien conference in 1990, basic education has been given priority by many donors. Equally important for most donors are the issues of gender, peace and good governance.

All donors, with the exception of the World Bank and the USA, focus their support on a relatively limited number of countries. The idea is of course that a narrower focus will produce more results. All donors except for the World Bank also concentrate their aid in a limited number of sectors. The choice of sectors is on the one hand decided by the needs and policies of the recipient countries, and on the other by the strengths and interests of the donor (de Gast: 6).

An example of concentration and donor coordination is offered by the Partnership for Africa programme.

*“The Partnership for Higher Education in Africa is an initiative of four US-based foundations—Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and The Rockefeller Foundation. It was formally established in April 2000, although the presidents and staff (both in the US and in Africa) began to discuss the needs of African universities, opportunities to work with them, and the desirability/practicality of a Partnership during the summer of 1999.”* (Levey: 1)

Collaboration between foundations has brought about greater synergy in their grant awards. It has also led to a shift in favour of support for institutional transformation rather than concentrating on project-related funding. Apart from this, the Partnership also provides funding to regional and sub-regional organizations and consortia that support the development of higher education in Africa.

Convergence between donors can also be observed in terms of funding mechanisms and intervention approaches. The share of the development budget which donors channel through multilateral programmes is growing. Over the years programme support has gained prominence over project support, and many donors have opted for basket funding to support sector programmes.

As mentioned before, all donors acknowledge the importance of shared responsibility and ownership in the South. This was reiterated by the conference participants. There is no doubt that ownership of projects is moving from Northern institutes to those in the South. More and more, demands in the South determine the utilization of available donor funds, and Southern partners are encouraged to take full ownership/responsibility for the funded programmes and projects of their choice.

Despite these developments, the representatives of the donor agencies in the conference still saw the lack of donor coordination as their main challenge. Likely reasons for the gap between dream and reality are: a) development cooperation also serves national political and economic interests; b) donors value their own ideological points of view on certain matters and c) development funds need to be accounted for at home.

Many donors have accepted the idea of untied aid. Yet some of their bilateral programmes are still tied. With regard to cooperation programmes in higher education and research and fellowship programmes, most donors have not yet decided to untie the aid. In many programmes cooperation should take place with a partner in the donor country, or training should take place at an institute in the donor country. Some fellowship programmes offer possibilities for education and training in other countries (e.g. the Norad, DAAD and Danida fellowship programmes).

The reasons for not wanting to untie cooperation programmes in higher education and research are threefold. Some donors explicitly underscore the importance which they see in research cooperation between their institutes and those in developing countries. It is considered to be advantageous to the Southern institutes, the Northern institutes, research

outputs and the attitude of the general public in the donor country towards development cooperation. It is a win-win situation.

Some institutes and donors in smaller countries fear that untying aid will be disadvantageous for their own universities because they may not be successful in global competition and therefore will no longer have the opportunity to enter into this sort of cooperation. That would be a pity for these institutes but also for the donor country. And, it may also be a pity for the institutes in the South because they may overlook excellent expertise that is available but not internationally well known.

The third reason is caution regarding the guarantees that can be given regarding a level playing field when it comes to untying the aid. The feeling among the Scandinavian donors is that untying only works when all parties participate without hesitation or hidden agenda, and when tender procedures are open and fair. These conditions have not yet been created (Boeren 2004: 7-8).

What is more, also ideologies do in fact play a role in donor coordination. Ideologies may bind or divide. On a number of topics donors have managed to converge their thinking. On others they defend their own views. Donors still have their own ideas on the most effective ways to reduce poverty, save the environment and establish peace and stability. They have their own list of countries for bilateral support based on a host of objective and subjective considerations. It is matter of interpretation whether one would select a country like present-day Zimbabwe as a development partner on the criterion of 'good governance'. It depends on whether 'good governance' is seen as a selection criterion or a development objective.

The growing pressure to render account for the funds that are being spent on development cooperation may jeopardize the ambition to create more synergy between donor programmes and cooperation in joint programmes. Donors have to show where the money went and what has been achieved with it. This is easier done in 'visible' bilateral projects, with fairly concrete results, than in complex joint financing programmes with ambitious long-term objectives.

Despite the difficulties involved, the call for more and better donor coordination remains loud and clear. The donor agencies present at the conference were of the opinion that donor coordination could be achieved by implementing the goals of the Paris Declaration (March 2005)<sup>6</sup> with regard to

- a) Southern ownership of policies, strategies and coordination of development efforts;
- b) alignment of donor support with national development strategies, institutes and procedures; and
- c) harmonization of donor activities.

The conference participants reached two conclusions: a) donors need to align their programmes more closely to national strategies for higher education and research – and where possible, strengthen them, and b) donors themselves need to coordinate their policies and programmes better.

In this context, donors need to clearly position higher education and research within sustainable development and poverty reduction policies, and adapt the Paris Declaration to the needs of higher education and research. Consultative mechanisms need to be established which involve all stakeholders and lead to an integrated approach to higher education and research which would also involve other government agencies in the North and the South.

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<sup>6</sup> High Level Forum, Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, Paris February 28 – March 2, 2005.

In order to make progress regarding these ambitions, the group of donors recommended the establishment of a small, independent mechanism (an institute or coordinating body), in which both donor agencies and Southern stakeholders participate. The exact meaning and scope of its proposed functions (see Proceedings), and the practical establishment and operation of the 'mechanism' still have to be defined.

The donors conceded that in order to bring the realization of the above plans any closer, solutions need to be found for a number of practical problems. These include problems involved in sustaining incentives for cooperation and the creation of fora for developing cooperation and coordination among donors. Another issue is the challenge of making creative use of complementarities between donors and their programmes. And last, but not least, how to resolve these problems at appropriate levels of intervention.

## *2.6 Conclusions I*

- There is common agreement that a well-functioning higher education system is a necessary condition for economic and other development, and that education systems should be supported in a holistic way. Universities should be seen as an integral part of the education system in which they play an indispensable role in ensuring the quality of other sub-systems.
- There is a strong inclination among donors to align international, national and thematic development policies to the MDGs, ultimately serving one common goal: poverty reduction. However, when it comes to support for higher education and research the link between this support, poverty reduction and MDG goals is fairly implicit.
- The donor community has achieved a convergence of thinking on a number of important policy issues. When it comes to coherence of national policies and synergy between development programmes a lot of ground still needs to be covered. The same applies to better donor coordination, a topic that has been on the development agenda for decades.
- Some donor agencies are of the opinion that institutional cooperation and fellowship programmes should not exclusively serve development aims but should also be seen as valuable mechanisms to serve academic interests of the donor country and to contribute to the building of good international relations. These so-called multi-purpose programmes are usually based on joint-financing agreements with financial contributions from various stakeholders. In practice this often creates problems in striking a balance between the various interests which satisfies all participating stakeholders.
- Changes in funding mechanisms for higher education and growing competition between higher education institutes around the world affect the interest shown by Northern institutes in involvement in development cooperation activities. If governments in the North believe it is important for their national higher education and research institutes to continue to play an active role in development cooperation, for whatever reasons, their policies and programmes should encourage institutes to do so. This requires a harmonization of policies between various ministries and research councils.

### **3 Programme modalities**

#### *3.1 Introduction*

Donors use a variety of modalities to support the strengthening of higher education and research capacities in developing countries. The following support mechanisms were mentioned in the papers of the conference participants:

- sector support programmes
- institutional cooperation programmes
- scholarships and fellowships
- research cooperation programmes
- research capacity-building projects
- commissioned strategic research projects
- research (coordination) networks, and education/research networks
- regional networks
- round-table meetings
- academic exchange programmes
- support to former fellowship holders
- support to regional centres of excellence

The papers devote little attention to sector support programmes, their focus being on institutional cooperation, research cooperation and fellowship programmes. Some of the modalities mentioned above are used within a broader programmatic approach, e.g. institutional cooperation programmes or research cooperation programmes.

In the paragraphs that follow, programme modalities are discussed from three perspectives that seem relevant to highlighting the similarities and differences between them. The first perspective concerns the intervention level of programmes, the second the type of assistance which characterizes programmes, and the third programme administration arrangements.

#### *3.2 Intervention levels*

International cooperation programmes in higher education and research focus their assistance at one or more of the following levels: a sector, a system, an institute or an individual.

Examples of programmes which take bilateral aid sectors as their point of departure are the Swedish research cooperation programme, the Dutch NPT programme<sup>7</sup> and the programme-funded component of the Danida Fellowship Programme. The topics of study and training in the Danish programme are linked to areas which are relevant for the bilateral programme which Danida funds in the programme countries. In the Dutch NPT programme, projects are designed to strengthen post-secondary education and training capacity in or for the bilateral aid sectors in programme countries.

The NPT also funds so-called systems projects, projects which aim to strengthen one aspect of the higher education system, e.g. quality assurance. Sida research cooperation also funds interventions at system level (see Kjellqvist).

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<sup>7</sup> The Netherlands Programme for the Institutional Strengthening of Post-secondary Education and Training Capacity (NPT) started in 2002 and is being implemented in 15 countries.

Over the years there has been a tendency in a number of bilateral programmes to take the institute as the focal point of intervention and to closely align projects with the strategic development plans of institutes. This approach is characteristic of the Dutch, Flemish and Swedish cooperation programmes that are designed to strengthen the performance of institutes. Through a 'package' of aid modalities they are strengthened in their teaching or research tasks, or in their task of designing, implementing and monitoring sector programmes. A package can consist of one or more of the following aid modalities: budget support, technical assistance, fellowships, partnerships, networks, and infrastructure development. The institutional focus of these programmes has led to a shift in the type of projects and the type of support. In the last decade or so it has become normal for higher education development programmes to sponsor projects whose aims include reinforcing management, building or expanding infrastructure and reinforcing support structures. Cooperation does not need to have a purely academic focus. Almost inevitably, these projects and programmes are based on strategic institutional development plans. It is believed that by developing strategic competence, the institutes will be in a much better position to fulfil their role in national and regional development.

Some donors explicitly focus on building research capacity in developing countries, at individual, institutional, policy and/or system level. Three donors devoting a considerable amount of their available funding to research programmes are Sweden, Denmark and Norway. The long history of the Swedish research cooperation programme shows an interesting evolution from a programme which focused on individual capacity development to a programme which intervenes at individual, institutional and policy level, dependent on specific needs and circumstances. The Swedish experience has also shown that properly functioning research management is necessary at the level of research implementing organizations. This should ensure that the research conducted is in line with governmental and university strategies, encourage researchers to generate their own ideas with regard to research topics, and assist researchers in attracting funding from possible sources (see Kjellqvist).

The DAAD and Ford IFP programmes approach capacity building from a different angle. DAAD and Ford believe that investments in key individuals from developing countries will contribute to social and economic development in their home countries. The Ford Foundation's IFP targets talented individuals from marginalized groups and communities lacking systematic access to higher education, and is concerned with broadening access to and increasing equity within the higher education sector. Another important principle promoted by the Foundation and embodied by IFP is that effective tertiary education for people from developing countries – whether pursued in their home country or region or abroad – should be clearly linked to their country's development needs (Dassin: 5).

DAAD focuses on the creation of an academic elite which has international links but is at the same time locally committed. The DAAD fellowship programmes are global in scope and are not primarily designed as instruments of development cooperation. According to Blumbach (p. 1), they follow what the OECD<sup>8</sup> in a recent policy paper on trends in international higher education called the 'mutual understanding approach', encompassing political, cultural, academic and development aid goals. DAAD improves the impact of 'traditional' fellowship programmes by creating structures (e.g. university partnerships and sustainable teaching and research networks) which centre around former scholarship holders and encourage and enable them to use their skills and international experience to make a contribution to development.

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<sup>8</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

There is a growing trend among fellowship programmes to try and contribute to organizational development in the South by a concentrated input of staff training. The Netherlands Fellowship Programmes implement one of the most far-reaching initiatives in this respect, in the sense that multi-annual agreements for staff training can be signed with organizations in the South. In this way, the boundaries between 'pure' institutional development programmes and 'pure' HRD programmes become less distinct.

### *3.3 Types of assistance*

Broadly speaking, bilateral cooperation and fellowship programmes encompass three categories of assistance: 1) training, 2) partnerships and 3) technical assistance. The scholarship and fellowship programmes offer clear examples of assistance through training. These programmes do not usually involve partnerships, and certainly not technical assistance. A partnership aspect may come in when training courses are offered as joint-degree programmes in which Southern and Northern training providers cooperate.

Establishing a partnership between institutes in the South and North is the characteristic mode of cooperation in the multi-purpose programmes whose aim is to help strengthen higher education and research institutes in the South. Inherent in the partnership model is the idea of mutual benefits, of striving for equality in the relationship, and a long-term commitment. Examples of programmes which advocate the partnership model are the Norwegian, Danish, Flemish and Canadian academic cooperation programmes. The former Dutch institutional cooperation programmes were also of the partnership type.

A sub-set of partnership programmes is the cooperation of institutes in networks. These can be based on regional, economic or thematic interests and involve regional partners as well as relations between institutes in the North and the South. Experience has shown that the development of partnerships takes time. Donor programmes should create scope for the continuation of worthwhile cooperation for a longer period (10-12 years). The group of programme administrators at the conference favoured programmes which allow for long-term cooperation between partners with mutual interests (North and South) and flexible modalities.

A general consensus among Southern and Northern institutes and programme administrators on the value of partnerships emerged from the papers and discussions at the conference. This is also supported by the outcomes of programme evaluations (see Boeren). Partnerships are valued by Southern institutes because they provide access to international networks and participation in international academic debates, research and publications. These aspects are important for motivating staff, putting the institute on the map, and attracting other interested partners, researchers and students. It is also for this reason that institutes would like to continue a cooperation with a well known and trusted partner. Northern institutes find in the partnerships with Southern partners interesting research topics, research talent and research outputs, and possibilities for staff and student exchanges.

There is also consensus about the fact that institutional cooperation should be closely linked to institutional and national priorities in the South, and should also attempt to establish networks between institutes in the South and in the North and involve relevant organizations in a sector. In addition, the participants from programme administering organizations in the conference recommended that institutional strengthening programmes should also pay attention to the environment in which institutes operate. Support for education or research system development beyond the institutional level (e.g. attention to national quality issues) should fall within the mandate and scope of programmes. The programme administrators also stressed the importance of integrating research activities in programmes which aim to

strengthen post-secondary education and training capacities. Research enriches the content of curricula, improves the quality of learning and the capacities of students and teaching staff.

There is a growing involvement of Southern institutes in development programmes, not as 'recipients' but as providers of technical assistance, consultancies and training. Southern 'supplying' institutes are becoming increasingly involved in the running of projects, both from the recipient Southern country and also from the region. Partnerships are no longer restricted to North-South partnerships. In various programmes, cooperation projects are leveraged to establish linkages with local organizations or with organizations in the region.

Cooperation in the form of technical assistance is defined here as providing a partner in the South with specific inputs to strengthen its higher education and research capacity. This can take the form of external advice, a project implemented for or together with the institute, staff secondment, infrastructure development, etc. The partner in the South is supposed to be in charge of the agenda. An example of this type of cooperation is the Dutch NPT programme. It involves Dutch institutes in the implementation of projects but they function as service providers, not as partners. The projects in the NPT programme are identified and formulated by Southern institutes. They are the owners of the projects, the Dutch organizations the co-implementers.

The Swedish research cooperation programme has similar characteristics. The programme enables institutes and organizations in the South to strengthen their research policy, environment and programme. Swedish institutes are called in when there is a need for their cooperation. In the Partnership for Africa initiative, higher education institutes get the means to strengthen their institutes and performance on the basis of a thorough inventory of their needs.

### *3.4 Administrative arrangements*

Looking at the various programmes, it is interesting to note the differences in arrangements regarding the administration of the bilateral cooperation and fellowship programmes. Most programmes are administrated by intermediary organizations (either branch organizations of the higher education sector in the donor country, or independent non-departmental organizations), a handful by ministries and hardly any by local organizations. Also interesting is the fact that these arrangements have recently changed for a number of programmes. These changes have everything to do with a clarification of roles and responsibilities between policymakers and implementers, and a shift in 'ownership' of the programmes.

The situation in the Netherlands is a clear illustration. The former seven international education programmes were phased out as from mid-2002. The three institutional cooperation programmes were of a joint-financing type. There were four fellowship programmes. The biggest fellowship programme was based on a quota system, whereby institutes in the Netherlands received a fixed number of fellowships for their international courses.

Four of the seven international cooperation programmes were administered by Nuffic, an independent foundation with strong affiliations with Dutch universities, and three by FION<sup>9</sup> and SAIL<sup>10</sup>, both umbrella organizations that represent thirteen international education institutes in the Netherlands. Through these arrangements, the universities and international organizations in the Netherlands had a strong sense of ownership of the programmes.

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<sup>9</sup> Federation of Institutes for International Education in the Netherlands.

<sup>10</sup> Association of the Institutes for Postgraduate International Education in the Netherlands and Wageningen University.

In the late nineties, the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation decided to examine the effectiveness of this set-up in the framework of the overall development cooperation agenda with a critical eye. This process of reorganizing a portfolio of International Education support modalities in order to create better coherence with overall development policies and more synergy between various programmes is described in the paper submitted by the Dutch DGIS.

*“In the Netherlands, in 1997 an Inter-ministerial Policy Review of International Education (IBO-IO) was organized with a dual aim. First, with a view to the need for changes in the funding system, it was to advise on how IE programmes<sup>11</sup> could be organized more efficiently and effectively. Second, it was to find out if and how IE's role in Dutch international cooperation could be enhanced. The IBO-IO report concluded that IE's role could grow if it were aligned to Dutch bilateral policy priorities (policy alignment). Second, it would be more effective if it paid more attention to the needs and priorities of partners in developing countries. Supply should therefore be adjusted to match demand. In doing so, the comparative advantage that the Netherlands could offer should be taken into consideration (demand orientation). Third, IE could be more efficient if it were restructured to enable the Dutch government to develop a policy of flexible application of resources (flexibility). Fourth, allocating finances to implementing institutes – both old and new – on the basis of price/quality ratios (competition; result orientation), was also expected to increase effectiveness and flexibility. Finally, the report recommended a transition period (4 years from 2000) during which the Dutch government would facilitate institutes' efforts to adapt to the new policy, with input finance gradually being replaced by output finance.*

*Early in 2001, the government approved the resulting International Education Policy Framework, which is still in operation today. The overall objective of the new International Education programmes was to help alleviate quantitative and qualitative shortages of skilled manpower, and to do so within the framework of sustainable capacity building aimed at reducing poverty in developing countries. Important elements of the framework included: i) the number of countries eligible for IE support was limited; and ii) the multi-faceted IE programme (comprising seven main programmes) was restructured into a three-component programme: NPT, NFP-AP and NFP-T.” (DGIS: 2)*

In order to increase the developmental relevance of the programmes and to create clear demarcation lines between policy, administration and implementation, it was decided that a) the Ministry would be responsible for policy setting; b) an independent intermediary organization would be in charge of programme administration and be responsible for programme implementation; and c) there would be no cofinancing in the programme. Instead, Dutch participants would be fully compensated for their participation in projects and training programmes. Nuffic, which was still interested in administering the new programmes, had no option but to change its status and break all its formal links with the higher education institutes. Following this change in legal status, Nuffic could tender for the administration of the new programmes, and was successful.

The situation just described relating to the former Dutch programmes is illustrative of the administrative situation of most multi-purpose and joint-financing programmes. In Norway, Belgium and Canada, the universities administer the programmes, or have a strong influence on the administration of programmes. In recent years, this situation has changed in a number of countries. In an attempt to decrease the influence of Northern institutes on the administration of the programmes and to shift ownership on to more neutral grounds,

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<sup>11</sup> International Education (IE) programmes.

management has been transferred to other bodies. In Norway, various international cooperation programmes are being administered by the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU; see Løvschall). Until recently, SIU operated as an administrative body under the Norwegian Council of Universities (UHR). SIU's status changed on 1 January 2004: it was detached from the branch organization and is now an administrative agency under the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (UFD) with its own Board of Directors. The Danish ENRECA research cooperation programme, which was administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but strongly influenced by the Danish universities, is now managed by the Council for Development Research. In Belgium programmes are still administered by a Council of Universities. However, the Council has been granted this responsibility in exchange for complete transparency and accountability in programme management and implementation (Boeren & Maltha: 13). In the UK, a number of programmes are administered by the British Council and the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Both are non-departmental public bodies. The Swedish research cooperation programme is one of the few which is still administered by the funding agency itself.

Even rarer is the situation in which local organizations in the South have the main responsibility for the administration of the programme. In the IFP, the Ford Foundation collaborates with local organizations in the countries where they are active. These local organizations are responsible for outreach, selection and placement of fellows.

*“This is essential to avoid a ‘top-down’ structure that reinforces, rather than inverts, the conventional hierarchies of power. At the same time, local experience is clearly enriched by the regional and global exchanges made possible through electronic communications (as well as face-to-face meetings).”* (Dassin: 10).

### 3.5 Conclusions 2

- In the majority of international cooperation programmes in higher education and research the focus is on institute building or the strengthening of institutional capacities. It is commonly understood that institute building requires a systemic approach with a long-term commitment.
- Partnerships between partners in the South and North and the provision of fellowships are the most common modes of cooperation in programmes which aim at institutional development in the South. South-South cooperation is becoming more common in these programmes, which may accelerate capacity building in the South.
- Through the provision of fellowships for joint-degree programmes conducted in the South, fellowship programmes make a double contribution to capacity building: that of individuals and that of the training institute.
- The impact of the various cooperation and fellowship programmes can be maximized if a) programme activities are linked to the strategic plans of the receiving institute; b) programmes are used in a complementary way in response to the needs and conditions in the South; and c) research activities are integrated into education and training capacity-building programmes.
- Tailor-made training programmes and fellowships linked to sectoral needs and in the form of multi-annual agreements focus strongly on strengthening institutional rather than individual capacities. These approaches can play an important role in the attempt to create synergy between programmes, in this case institute-building programmes, sector programmes and fellowship programmes.

- In the management of programmes there is a trend towards clearer demarcation of roles and responsibilities in the separate areas of policymaking, programme administration and programme implementation. This leads to positive effects in terms of transparency in decision making, management and accountability.

## **4 Experiences and lessons learned**

### *4.1 Introduction*

The papers report on experiences and lessons learned at two levels: a) programme set-up and b) programme implementation. The latter are the most numerous as they relate to practical experiences on the ground.

When it comes to programme implementation, a distinction needs to be made between institutional cooperation programmes and fellowship programmes. Because of their different focus and implementation, the experiences and lessons learned are of a different nature.

One of the most striking observations of all internal and external evaluations discussed in the papers is that it is difficult if not impossible to measure the impact of interventions in the field of higher education development.

### *4.2 Programme set-up*

The papers submitted by donors and administrators discuss a number of dilemmas relating to the set-up of programmes which undermine the effectiveness of their implementation. In 'A bird's eye view', Boeren reports on the findings and conclusions of a number of evaluations and reviews of cooperation and fellowship programmes. Most dilemmas and issues have already been introduced and discussed in the previous paragraphs on policy issues and modalities. The major findings and lessons learned are summarized below.

#### Ownership of programmes and projects

The strength of multi-purpose programmes with cofunding arrangements is their capacity to mobilize resources from other sources. Other strengths mentioned include their capacity to promote innovative initiatives that evolve into broader programmes, to foster partnerships, to exploit and promote enthusiasm and goodwill in the North and overseas countries' partner institutes, and to use all of these to transfer knowledge and skills from the North to developing countries, and also in some measure from the latter to the North.

The trade-off with cofunded programmes is that the primary funder of the programme cannot claim full control over the programme and its implementation. It has to allow for the interests of cofunders in exchange for their contributions. This is an uncomfortable situation for both sides.

#### Coherence between policies and programmes

The evaluation of a number of cooperation and fellowship programmes reveals that many of them suffer from such internal inconsistencies. Two sorts of problems afflict many programmes: a) a combination of specific programme objectives which are difficult to match; b) incompatibility of the principles guiding the programme with the administrative arrangements.

Evaluations show that coherence between programmes is dependent on a number of factors: a) complementarity of the goals of the programmes; b) congruence of eligibility criteria and administrative arrangements and c) the degree to which the interests being served by programmes match.

According to Boeren (p. 26), as a rule of thumb, integration of international cooperation programmes in broader policy frameworks is easier to achieve when it concerns single-purpose programmes because a) there are no conflicting or competing interests which need to be accommodated; b) the owner and client(s) of the programme can easily be identified; c) it is clear who should pay for the output of the programme and d) outcomes are directly related to the purpose of the programme.

#### Inconsistencies in the set-up of programmes

A number of evaluation reports (see Boeren) point at the inconsistencies which are inherent in international cooperation programmes in higher education, be it institutional cooperation programmes or fellowship programmes.

- The principle of being demand-driven versus ownership of the programme and projects in the North. This is a conflict that can be observed in the cofunding programmes. This has a bearing on the identification and selection of projects as well as the management of project funds.
- The goal of building relevant human capacity for the South versus the supply-driven offer of training in the North. Most scholarship and fellowship programmes are still predominantly supply-driven, despite providers' claims that their courses are designed to be relevant to participants from developing countries. Some fellowship programmes offer opportunities for training in the region or in other countries where the training offer may be more relevant to the training needs of the fellows.
- Overarching development goals which focus on poverty reduction and the achievement of MDGs do not always tally with the goals of capacity-building programmes. The poorest countries or institutes are not always the best targets for institutional cooperation programmes. They need help, but not necessarily the type of assistance which set programmes can offer.

Programme evaluations indicate that the 'organic fit' of the programme and what it has to offer at that point in the history and development of the institute is an important condition for success. Programmes need to come at the right time with the right opportunities to help realize the strategic plans of the institute (Boeren: 15).

If the identification and selection of institutes is decided upon by policy goals rather than realistic selection criteria, the programme can hardly be expected to achieve optimal results. In many development programmes partners are chosen because they are weak and need to be strengthened. The programmes themselves, however, do not always offer the means or opportunities to cater for the specific needs of a weak partner at that moment. In this situation projects exist because capacity is lacking. Yet the absence of such capacity too often precludes recipients from taking advantage of the very support they need.

#### Effective linking of fellowship opportunities

Fellowship programmes give individuals the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills through education and training, with the ultimate aim of improving their professional performance. Implicitly or explicitly, these fellowships are also provided in the framework of a broader goal, i.e. the improvement of performance in particular sectors and/or institutes. Not

surprisingly, most fellowship programmes restrict participation to mid-career professionals who have a job and are expected to return to the employing organization after they have completed their education or training.

The training of an individual may not be all that effective unless it is linked to an organizational plan, supported by the management of the organization and linked to the provision of facilities to employ the newly acquired knowledge and skills. The evaluations indicate that the provision of fellowships alone is seldom enough to lead to improvements in organizational performance. They need to be accompanied by other support such as improvements in infrastructure, equipment, research funds, libraries and international networks (Boeren: 25).

Hence, greater coordination is needed between efforts to improve the capacities of individuals and institutes. Programmes that seek to increase the capacities of individual staff need to be linked to programmes which aim to boost the capacities of developing country universities and other organizations (Kirkland & Jenkins: 3).

### *4.3 Programme implementation – institutional cooperation programmes*

The papers submitted by the conference participants and Boeren's paper on the programme evaluation contain many important findings and lessons regarding the implementation of institutional cooperation programmes and research cooperation programmes. Below the more common findings and lessons are discussed.

**Institute building.** Programmes which aim to strengthen the performance of an institute in education and/or research need to adopt a comprehensive or systemic approach which not only builds capacity to teach and do research but also to plan, to formulate policies, to manage and to administer. The approach should also involve the environment in which the institute operates, i.e. the responsible ministry and relevant stakeholders in sectors and society. The strategic plan of an institute should be the starting point for the identification of projects and cooperation approach. The activities should always be chosen in relation to the identified objectives and long-term development needs of the institute and the country concerned.

Exemplary lessons can be drawn from the Swedish research cooperation programme, as reported by Kjellqvist in his paper. This programme has a very long history. It started in 1975 and still has the same objectives although the approach has been adjusted over time. The major lesson learned is that to obtain the full support of a university, management priorities must be set in accordance with the university's strategic planning. The university management must for their part show commitment to promoting research activities, despite the need to use staff to cope with a heavy teaching burden.

The Swedish experience also suggests three areas where universities and national knowledge systems need to be strengthened: research policy, research environments and research management. The first and the last require that donors cooperate in order to help developing countries set up mechanisms conducive to research. External support for the strengthening of research environments should be aligned with national policies and research strategies both at national and university level.

The Swedish experience has also shown that properly functioning research management is necessary at the level of research-implementing organizations. Managers should ensure that the research conducted is in line with governmental and university strategies, encourage researchers to generate their own research topics, and help researchers attract funding from possible sources.

The need for research must be recognized not only by university management but also by government through the appropriate ministries. The resources available for research must be administered through national research strategies that align with development and poverty reduction strategies.

**Ownership.** Ownership is created by giving the partners in the South the job of identifying and justifying the demand, and responsibility for formulating and implementing projects, as well as for management, financial and other administration and monitoring. The programme set-up and regulatory framework should encourage Southern partners to exercise this ownership. The set-up of the Dutch NPT programme provides a coherent framework of principles and rules allowing Southern partners to take full ownership. However, in practice not all Southern partners have the capacity for or feel comfortable accepting all the responsibilities which come with full ownership. Sometimes local legislation, rules and regulations impede the effective administration of projects by local organizations. In these circumstances, the local organization may even suggest leaving project administration to the Northern partner.

In terms of programmes, funding mechanisms should be negotiated so that they are as *direct* as possible. According to the recommendations of the CHET study, this means that:

- There should be as few intermediaries as possible.
- Access to funding should be as procedurally uncomplicated as possible.
- Most importantly, local institutes should have as much discretion in the disbursement of funds - balanced by a corresponding level of accountability - as is practically possible.<sup>12</sup>

**Partnerships and linkages.** The most successful projects in research and other cooperation programmes are characterized by good strategic planning processes, the matching of the interests of the partners and quality research outputs. Good personal contacts between researchers, backed by institutional commitment on both sides, contribute to the achievement of good project results (see Ilsøe and Steen & Heen). Another success factor is a longer-term vision when partners start planning for cooperation. Individual interests are often the starting point of projects, but they are not enough to make projects a success. Projects need to be integrated in the research and teaching programmes of the institutes on both sides and not remain islands of cooperative research between two researchers. The institutionalization of project activities should receive specific attention from the outset of a project (Boeren: 16).

As experience in the Danish research cooperation programme ENRECA has demonstrated, the best partnerships based on personal relations will last a long time, even though the initial funding stops. Research relationships started as 'arranged matches' will only outlive the initial funding if they have developed into genuine partnerships. In this context, it is believed that there is an advantage in allowing the partners to select each other before they apply for support. ENRECA experience shows that matches made on an individual basis often contain the attitudinal values so important for the quality of the partnership (Ilsøe: 10).

**Flexibility.** Experience with the various programmes has made it clear that there is no single recipe or blueprint for developing an organization's capacity. Capacity development involves learning and experimentation, and what works well in one place may fail in another. The outcomes of programme evaluations (Boeren) stress the need for a flexible approach that enables the organization in the South to address its needs in a manner that is in line with its

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<sup>12</sup> Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET), *Capacity building initiatives in higher education*, Sunnyside, SA, 2002.

strategic plan and its capacities. The approach should take the organization's strengths as the starting point, even if they are minimal at the beginning, rather than focusing on deficits from the start. Using one-size-fits-all approaches to strengthen systems or institutes, without allowing for differing capacities, opportunities and circumstances, is bound to be counterproductive.

According to Beland (p. 8), one approach might be to consider a continuum of varying types of intervention with overseas partners. A more flexible mechanism or UPDC infrastructure may be required where some (likely most) programming is focused on the bilateral target countries, Africa, bilateral priority sectors and Millennium Development Goals, while other programming tends to target the mid-level economies still on the ODA list.

**Sustainability is a shared responsibility.** The partners cooperating in a project need to work together towards the realization of sustainable results. This applies not only to project implementers but also to the institute which is meant to benefit from the project, the ministries determining the conditions which will allow the institute to successfully perform its tasks, and the funding agency.

According to Ilsøe (p. 15), a realistic measurement of sustainability is the researchers' or institutes' ability to attract further funding from other donors. The ENRECA evaluation pointed out that fostering high-quality research outputs is more likely to lead to sustainability, while the essential, less glamorous and longer-term task of building research capacity is less likely to attract future funding.

**Benefits at home.** Although internationalization may not be a primary objective of institutional cooperation projects, it nevertheless is an important outcome of the projects, as reported by Beland when talking about the UPDC programme. She also draws attention to the enormous potential represented by student participation in projects, both in terms of overseas and Canadian students' roles in research, as well as in terms of public engagement and internationalization.

#### *4.4 Programme implementation – fellowship programmes*

The evaluations and review of fellowship and scholarship programmes contain the following findings and conclusions (see Boeren).

**Effectiveness.** Most fellowship and scholarship programmes can claim high rates of success in terms of completion rates. The vast majority of the candidates return to their home country and employer, although the figures vary between programmes. None of the scholarship and fellowship programmes reviewed have a clearly demarcated position or objectives within broader educational and developmental policy frameworks, nor do they define results in order to measure success. This makes impact measurement *a priori* an impossible undertaking. It is assumed that they will complement other schemes, but this is rarely translated into operational guidelines or administrative arrangements.

The fellowship programmes share a common assumption that improved performance will have an impact at programme/project level. This is an ideal model of the impact of the training process. However, impact at programme level demands much more than simply allowing employees to acquire formal learning abroad. When they return home, many candidates do not have the chance to fully apply the new knowledge and skills they have acquired. The reasons for this relate to the work environment or to a change of tasks or position.

The impact of their training on the organizations where alumni are employed is found to depend critically on the degree of rigidity, inefficiency, openness to reforms, transparency and

good governance in the civil service and education sector. When the training of the individual is not embedded in an organization's manpower development plan, and when the critical mass of the persons trained is insufficient to ignite any change in the organization, the development impacts are unsurprisingly modest.

**Efficiency.** According to Boeren (p. 27), there is little doubt that training in the region and joint-degree programmes will claim a larger share of the available fellowships in the years to come. Joint-degree programmes are interesting for the institutes in developing countries and for the institutes in the North. This arrangement is most encouraging both from a professional quality perspective, as well as from the perspective of impact (developmental and academic), relevance, effectiveness and cost-efficiency. Problems relating to accreditation of degrees need to be overcome. A drawback could be the financial compensation for the Northern partner, which could work out much lower compared to the tuition fees and fellowship revenues obtained for a regular course in the North.

**Relevance.** Most fellowship programmes offer training opportunities in the donor country. The courses are developed in the North from a Northern perspective. For funding agencies that see fellowships as a vehicle to promote the institutes at home this is not regarded as a problem. However, donors who fund fellowships for development purposes expect training courses to respond to training needs in developing countries. This applies to the relevance of course content and the approach to training. Fellowship and scholarship programmes have incorporated mechanisms to enhance the relevance of education and training and to make them more demand-driven:

- In many study programmes, sandwich courses and individual assignments related to the work of the candidate play an important role as tools for linking course subjects and to ensure the relevance of the training to the organizations where candidates are employed.
- In the programme-funded Danida Fellowship Programme, the training needs of bilateral sectors and programmes form the basis for identifying specific training programmes. Training opportunities in the region or in the North are identified to match the training need.
- The Dutch NFP offers organizations in the South the opportunity to submit proposals for training for staff members that is tailored to the organization's specific training needs. A Dutch training provider is identified to conduct the training in the region or in the North.
- The Dutch NFP also offers a number of organizations in the South the opportunity to sign a multi-annual training agreement with Nuffic. Under this agreement a number of fellowships and training opportunities are provided over a period of time according to the training needs of the organization.
- The DAAD programme, Danida Fellowship Programme and Norad Fellowship Programme provide fellowships for study at institutes in the region. According to Blumbach (p. 4) "*Universities in the South have successfully established regional centres of excellence, dealing with prominent issues of development in teaching and research. The 'in country/neighbouring country' fellowship programme of the DAAD has been initiated as early as 1962 by African partners.*"
- Fellowships, although in small numbers, for joint-degree programmes conducted at Southern institutes in collaboration with a Northern partner are provided by the DAAD, the Norad Fellowship Programme and Netherlands Fellowship Programme.

The experiences with five out of six mechanisms are good. There is not enough evidence about the effectiveness of the multi-annual agreements in the Dutch NFP yet to conclude that this approach works well.

**Follow-up.** Many candidates feel the need to remain in touch with the training institute in order to stay abreast of new opportunities for education and training and to maintain professional contacts with the institute. Refresher courses and re-invitation programmes are popular schemes to keep in touch and up-to-date.

Continued support to former fellowship holders through equipment grants, academic literature and invitations to seminars and conferences or to return to their host universities for shorter periods of further training and research is a standard feature of the fellowship programmes of the DAAD (Blumbach: 5).

Alumni networks offer scope for professional exchanges and for cooperation between alumni in the same country. Alumni associations can also be a vehicle for establishing useful contacts between alumni and government agencies, companies and training institutes.

Academic exchange creates personal ties and 'informal' working contacts between individuals. The structural impact of these relationships can be increased by transforming them into institutionalized cooperation (Blumbach: 4).

#### *4.5 Conclusions 3*

- Lack of coherence between overall objectives, specific objectives and guiding principles is common in programmes, and can be quite counterproductive in terms of effectiveness. In designing programmes, proper care should be given to the internal logic of the programme framework. The implications of incorporating potentially competing objectives should be properly analyzed.
- The principle of cofinancing is practiced in a number of cooperation programmes. Inevitably this mechanism leads to a delicate balancing of interests of the cofinancing stakeholders which easily leads to irritation when one or more stakeholders feel short-changed by the others.
- Coherence between programmes depends on complementarity of the overall and specific goals of the programmes, congruence of eligibility criteria and administrative arrangements, and compatibility of the various interests which are being served by programmes. It is logical to assume that single-purpose programmes are more easily integrated in broader policy frameworks than multi-purpose programmes.
- Partnerships and networks are much appreciated, as are effective modes of cooperation in programmes which aim to strengthen institutional capacities in the South. Although the overall aim should be to serve the capacity needs of the institute in the South, it is clear that effective partnerships are based on a common understanding of and respect for mutual interests on both sides.
- Institutional capacity development involves learning and experimentation, and what works well in one place may fail in another. The experiences in the various programmes have made clear that there is no single recipe or blueprint for developing an organization's capacity. The outcomes of programme evaluations stress the need for a systemic approach that is flexible and enables the organization in the South to address its needs in a manner that is in line with its strategic plan and its capacities.

- Fellowship and scholarship programmes can contribute to institutional capacity building using two approaches: a) selecting individual fellows on the basis of their capacities and potential to play a role as an agent of change in their profession, organization or society; or b) training a critical mass of staff members which can bring about changes/innovations in an institute/organization. A critical mass can have any size and composition depending on the organizational context.
- The provision of fellowships alone is seldom enough to lead to improvements in organizational performance. They need to be accompanied by other support such as improvements of infrastructure, equipment, research funds, libraries, international networks, etc.
- Most of the cooperation programmes, and especially the fellowship programmes, lack clearly defined objectives and verifiable indicators for measuring success. Despite the positive accounts of alumni and employers about the effects of training on individuals and organizations, there is little formal evidence of the impact of training programmes on poverty reduction, or on improvements in sectors, economy or society. The fellowship programmes lack a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme.