

# **Northern perspectives on development cooperation in higher education and research**

The perspective of Northern academics and development practitioners

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## **1 Introduction**

Two major topics dominate the papers of the Northern and Dutch academics and Dutch practitioners as well as their discussions during the conference: a) the motives of Northern institutes for being involved in development cooperation with higher education and research sectors and institutes in the South, and b) visions and experiences regarding modes of cooperation between Northern and Southern institutes.

The conference papers of the following authors were consulted in making the analysis: Robinson, Molenaar & Beerens, Altbach, Bohmert, Molendijk & Scholten, Gijzen, Nilsen, Kirkland & Jenkins, Copland, Berlamont, and van der Horst. Finally, the papers of the Platform International Education (PIE) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Education and Development Division) were also used as sources.

## **2 Motives for being involved in international cooperation**

To obtain a better understanding of the current situation, it is interesting to look at the motives of the stakeholders (in this case managers, academics and development practitioners from Northern higher education institutes) for being involved in international cooperation in higher education with Southern institutes. The motives highlighted in the papers are of a financial, academic or ethical nature. Some institutes see developing countries as a market for making money through teaching programmes, others want to benefit from the subjects researched and Southern brains in joint research activities, yet others feel obliged to assist deprived institutes or scholars in the South in developing the necessary education and research capacity.

### *2.1 Financial reasons*

Market forces are affecting higher education as never before, which in Altbach's view must be taken into account when considering international exchanges and cooperation: higher education is no longer seen as a public good but more and more as a private good. He notes that because of growing enrolment worldwide, academic systems are coming under pressure, the response to which is the development of income-generating schemes and programmes. He observes a tendency in Northern universities to raise tuition fees and to attract paying foreign (read: Southern) students. This constitutes a major source of income for the Northern universities and has become a driving force behind the internationalization of western universities.

He also observes a trend towards the commercialization of patents, licences and other aspects of intellectual property rights. He therefore concludes that there is a growing tendency to see research as belonging to the private sector. This coincides with a worldwide trend in which private higher education is the most rapidly expanding sector, containing a wide range of types of institutes.

Commercialization and harmonization lead to expansion and differentiation of the education supply, as explained in the paper submitted by Molendijk and Scholten (pp.3-4). They point to three developments which are gaining in importance: 1) more demand-driven education; 2) post-graduate education for new target groups, for instance professionals, and 3) internationalization of the educational market. These trends have led their university (Free University, Amsterdam) to react positively to the development of new types of educational programmes: programmes targeted at

professionals, with new methods of education delivery (part-time, web-based distance learning), of a strongly cross-border nature and based on ICT networks.

Various authors mention the increasing commercial and academic importance of attracting foreign students. Nilsen highlights the value of the mutually reinforcing effects of linking scholarships and capacity-building programmes, for the South as well as for the institutes in the North. The linking of fellowships for master degree programmes in the North to ongoing collaboration with partners in the South can be seen as an important supplement to other means of building capacity and competence in the South. On the other hand, such linkage is also of vital importance for ensuring relevance to master programmes in the North.

A relatively new element noted by Altbach in the internationalization policy of Northern higher education institutes is the development of branch campuses ('off-shore' campuses) and twinning programmes. He notices that these are mainly North-South initiatives in which the North is firmly in control of curriculum, faculty and degrees (p. 11). The Northern host institutes hope to earn money from such initiatives. He gives examples of institutes currently involved in the establishment of off-shore branches, like the Chicago Business School, INSEAD business school, and Monash University in Australia. The curriculum provided by the branches is the same as that on the home campus. Singapore and Qatar are setting up branches in higher education for building capacity in their own education sectors. Countries such as South Africa and Vietnam have succeeded in attracting branch campuses as well. Not addressed in Altbach's paper is the question of whether all these off-shore branch activities are actually generating financial returns on investment. At a seminar organized by SURF<sup>1</sup> in the Netherlands, it was revealed that various Australian universities involved in off-shore branching have experienced difficulty in generating returns on investment from certain branch divisions.

## 2.2 *Altruistic/ethical motives*

There are also many institutes that are involved in development programmes without any commercial or political underpinning. For some altruism is the leading principle. This can be seen in Nilsen's paper about the University of Bergen's position and that of Copland about the involvement of Westminster University in international cooperation. Copland advocates a combination of an ethical attitude and a realistic frame of mind. He is critical of the general, and in his view narrow viewpoint that universities should primarily stick to their core business: research and education in the pursuit of knowledge. The academic community should also feel it is its duty to address global social and economic inequalities.

*"We are all part of the global society. We are interdependent and the future health of this global society has to be a concern for all of us. Universities are bodies of knowledge and high level expertise. We must use this, not only for the development of knowledge and skills in our own countries but also to assist those countries which, often as a result of history of geography, are in greatest need."* (p. 1)

He recently noticed with some satisfaction a shift in the thinking of the UK Secretary of State for Education when the latter said he was looking for increased international activity by UK universities and made particular reference to the importance of developing off-shore campuses.

Copland illustrates this off-shore principle by highlighting a large-scale project in which his university (Westminster University – WU), has created a new university/branch in Uzbekistan: the Westminster International University of Tashkent. WU took considerable financial risks by operating in an unstable region with an unstable political regime and in a very different cultural context. However, the project

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<sup>1</sup> Surf is the central organization in the Netherlands which provides ICT services and maintains the ICT network for the Dutch higher education institutes, among its other activities.

got off to a good start because while maintaining academic integrity and idealistic and not-for-profit motives, WU managed to respond to the higher education needs in a developing country by applying business planning approaches.

From WU's experiences, Copland concludes that these ventures require the long-term commitment of all parties involved, and that universities have to take the long view. Apart from risks there are also potential medium and long-term benefits as they

*".. provide new opportunities for local students and economies and for our own staff and students to learn from such developments. They can provide a base for research, giving a different experiential base. We have to be clear about the motivation, the risks and the long term benefits as we make decisions to move ahead."* (p. 7)

### 2.3 Academic reasons

The academically inspired motives which are mentioned most frequently relate to opportunities for doing joint research on topics of interest to both Northern and Southern researchers, setting up joint degrees, strengthening the institute's profile and position internationally with regard to teaching and research, accessing brains, and exchanging staff and students.

The papers from Norway (Nilsen et al.) and Belgium (Berlamont) focus on these academic reasons for development cooperation. Nilsen writes that at his university (University of Bergen) development research occupies a prominent position in institutional policies and the bulk of resources for implementing the research strategy in cooperation with Southern partners comes from the university budget. In this context, it is interesting to note that the Norwegian government "*strongly advocates international collaboration and student mobility under the umbrella of bilateral agreement arrangements*". It is official Norwegian policy that every Norwegian student should be entitled to spend 3-12 months at a foreign university as part of his/her studies. Nilsen reports that the University of Bergen has currently 100 bilateral collaboration agreements with institutes worldwide, including universities in Cuba, Colombia, South Africa, China and India (Nilsen et al.: p. 8).

Development research is explicitly mentioned in the job descriptions of 26 full-time academic positions at the University of Bergen. Five university research centres have been established since 1986 to work on specific development research issues. The extent to which development research is actually being integrated in other Norwegian universities' formal strategies is not addressed in the paper.

Berlamont describes the situation at Flemish universities, which is comparable to that in Norway. Belgium too has a long tradition of university development cooperation. Over the years, the emphasis in cooperation has shifted from short, monodisciplinary cooperation projects to fairly long-term, large-scale, multidisciplinary and institutional collaboration projects. The VLIR (Flemish Interuniversity Council) in Belgium promotes development cooperation with interventions in the South as well as in the North. The VLIR administers academic cooperation programmes and fellowship programmes for students from developing countries but also study visits which enable Flemish students to do part of their research in developing countries. The cooperation programmes aim at achieving high quality standards both in education and research.

*".. the Flemish Universities hope to create nuclei of development, local 'centres of excellence' where, through joint research with Flemish Universities, a true academic research attitude reigns and which train other academics in the university of the region creating a multiplication effect."* (p. 6).

Until recently, it was policy that projects should predominantly cater for the needs of the partner in the South ('demand driven'). However, as a result of a recent policy shift, projects are now expected to acknowledge the interests of both partners in any cooperation. It is believed that mutual interests lay

the foundation for effective, long-term collaboration and this creates a win-win situation for all stakeholders (pp. 4-5).

Until recently cooperation programmes and fellowship programmes in the Netherlands had similar characteristics to those in Norway and Belgium. As explained in the paper contributed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, new international education programmes were initiated in 2002 which broke with the approach and governing principles of preceding programmes. The new programmes are demand driven, actively stimulate project ownership in the South, and encourage competition between providers in the Netherlands. Three years after the launch of the programmes, the Ministry acknowledges that Dutch higher education institutes are showing less interest in development cooperation and related research agendas than before. According to Bohmert (p. 1), there are 'problematic relationships between aid and academia in the Netherlands' at the moment. This is not only caused by the change in policy but also by the lack of commitment to development cooperation among university leaders and the negative image of universities within development agencies (p. 2).

What Dutch higher education institutes expect from their participation in development cooperation is not very different from what their colleagues in Norway and Belgium want, and is clearly described in the paper submitted by PIE, the Dutch platform representing higher and international education institutes in the field of institutional strengthening of education and research capacity in developing countries. The PIE paper recommends that a new perspective or vision should be developed addressing the most important characteristics of development cooperation in higher education, namely entry to the global knowledge community, generation of knowledge products and the long-term nature of partnerships. The latter implies long-term commitment on the part of all stakeholders: Northern and Southern partners and funding agencies.

The new vision which PIE refers to should also be comprehensive: it has to be linked with other current trends in higher education, such as growing globalization/internationalization and competitiveness, the brain drain/circulation, the ICT revolution and the recruitment of new talent by Northern institutes in the developing world. Development cooperation and internationalization policies need to be connected; they can and must reinforce each other. In PIE's view, these policies are not connected in the Netherlands at present, indeed they are sometimes in outright contradiction of each other.

The Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGIS) at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs is aware of the widening gap between itself and the higher education sector and has indicated that it plans to revitalize its contacts with Dutch academia and in particular the Dutch academic research world. Both parties need to define a shared vision on the role of universities in development cooperation if both want to meet the challenges that globalization presents (Bohmert, p. 5). Inevitably, this also requires a fine-tuning of policies among various ministries: DGIS, Education, Foreign Affairs and Economic Affairs (*ibid.*, p. 4).

## *2.4 A mix of reasons*

Except for the commercial providers of education, which are primarily money driven, most institutes are in development cooperation for a mix of the three motives: financial, academic and ethical.

The Netherlands is an example of a country where national policies on education, development cooperation and global development have forced the higher education sector to rethink its involvement in development cooperation. As a result, the Dutch higher education and research landscape shows a patchwork of institutes which in varying degrees and for different reasons cooperate with developing countries. This situation is described in the paper submitted by Van der Horst. He explains that although many Dutch universities have a strong tradition in various third-world related areas such as tropical agriculture, tropical irrigation and ethnology, few Dutch universities explicitly mention development cooperation in their strategic policy plans (p. 9). When they refer to developing countries

in the South, these are almost without exception emerging countries such as Brazil, India and China (p. 2), and the primary aim is to attract foreign students. Van der Horst explains that this tendency is fed by the changing views of the Dutch government, which increasingly sees higher education as a commodity and export product. The institutes are expected to trade products and services on the 'international higher education export market'.

At the same time, it is also clear that despite the absence of development cooperation from official institutional policies, in practice development cooperation has not disappeared from the agenda in Dutch universities. Van der Horst cites a recently executed quantitative survey by RAWOO,<sup>2</sup> which revealed more than 450 research programmes varying in nature and scale with a link to development cooperation. It is estimated that over a hundred university departments, including the international educational institutes and research schools, conduct development-related research. It is however unclear what the real scope and volume of these research efforts are; whether there is a real or indirect link with development cooperation or needs in developing countries, and to what extent it involves collaborations with institutes in the South or research capacity building in developing countries.

The Dutch 'international education institutes' (IE institutes), established fifty years ago to provide professional training to mid-career professionals from developing countries, form a special case. These institutes specialize in specific international development fields such as water management (UNESCO-IHE)<sup>3</sup>, urban management (HIS)<sup>4</sup>, and geo-information systems and remote sensing (ITC)<sup>5</sup>. They were largely funded from development cooperation funds. During the past decade these institutes have merged or established firm liaisons with Dutch universities.

When the Dutch government decided to change the organization and funding of international education programmes, the IE lost their undisputed annual allocations of institutional grants and fellowships from development funds. Now they have to compete for development cooperation funds among themselves and with universities, and are looking for alternative sources of income. Although development cooperation is still their field of operation, they are now in it for the business more than ever before. Development motives and commercial interests are two sides of the same coin at IE institutes these days.

### **3 Forms of cooperation**

For research universities around the world, international cooperation and exchange of research information are among the cornerstones of their existence. It is therefore unsurprising that the papers of the Northern (including Dutch) academics focus on forms of cooperation between Northern and Southern institutes. At the conference too this was the main topic of discussion. Cooperation was examined from three perspectives: a) inter-institutional relations; b) effective collaboration mechanisms, and c) the role of modern technology in cooperation programmes. The views and discussions on 'effective collaboration mechanisms' have already been incorporated in the previous chapter, together with the views of donors and programme administering organizations. The other two perspectives are discussed below and focus on international networks and partnerships (perspective a) and on cross-border education and the role of ICT (perspective c).

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<sup>2</sup> Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council (RAWOO), Development-related research in the Netherlands. An overview. April 2005.

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education.

<sup>4</sup> Institute for Housing Studies (IHS).

<sup>5</sup> International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC).

### *3.1 Networks and partnerships*

The issue of networking and collaborative partnerships between institutes in the South and the North was raised by a number of stakeholder groups, but tabled as a major issue by the managers of Southern institutes and the managers and academics of Dutch institutes. The Northern academics spent a considerable time discussing research cooperation in the context of centres of excellence. In the course of the conference the theme ‘networking and partnerships’ emerged as one of the five major thematic areas. Here we will only report on the main lines of the discussion and principal dilemmas; the detailed recommendations of all authors can be read in their papers and the general recommendations of the conference in the proceedings.

According to the participants, teaching, research and innovation networks should be seen as drivers of well functioning higher education and research systems. These networks rely on mutually beneficial partnerships between institutes in the South, and between institutes in the South and North. It was recognized that the road to this ideal situation is still long and full of obstacles. Networks should be dynamic and generate content in terms of knowledge development in a thriving international cooperation setting based on real partnerships. According to the participants, a number of pre-conditions must be met before this ideal can – to some extent – be achieved. The partners in the network need to have access to good institutional infrastructures and services (communications, ICT infrastructure and services, relevant databases), sufficient and sustained funding, interested and well trained staff, institutional and national policies conducive to networking, and a shared research agenda.

Networks are not exclusively based on specific scientific programmes or disciplinary areas but can also be linked to relevant topics like quality assurance, the administration of institutes or to higher levels of policy development. It was felt that networks should try and involve the private sector and society to ensure a better embedding of network activities in higher level policies and in society.

The Dutch academics in particular advocated networks with multilateral partners, combining North-South, South-South and North-North-South-South links. In these collaborations there should be a strong link between research and training, with the emphasis on joint knowledge generation and the generation of knowledge ‘products’, such as publications, PhDs, and new educational programmes. In addition, a shift from partnerships to part-netships would be welcomed: institutionalized, multilateral, long-term relationships based on shared objectives, mutual benefits, equality in responsibilities, sound business agreements and sustainable funding. They should be funded at the policy/government level and not at the level of single projects.

What such a network might look like is described by Gijzen in his paper on the PoWER project<sup>6</sup> of the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education in the Netherlands. The PoWER project brings together 17 international partners in the water sector and is an action-oriented partnership to provide education, life-long learning, research and capacity-building services in an effective manner to developing countries. Important elements of the project are the establishment of a dialogue and the development of strong links between university groups and relevant sector organizations. The project aims to establish multi-institutional educational exchange programmes, based on long-term cooperation and partnerships. Of vital importance is the principle of equality: a) shared costs – staff, fellowship and research equipment, consumables etc. can be financed via cofinancing arrangements between public and private institutes, and b) shared benefits: the model will only work if benefits can be generated for all involved (Gijzen: 8).

Other institutes too have well developed strategies for building international partnerships. Molenaar & Beerens explain in their paper that the strategy of the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) in Enschede is moving towards building long-term partnerships. Together with partners around the globe, ITC is setting up joint educational programmes that address

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<sup>6</sup> Partnership for Water Education and Research

the increasing demand for education and are reckoned to be more cost-efficient and effective. They explain that potential partner organizations should comply with certain criteria in order to be eligible for cooperation with ITC. Furthermore, the process of establishing formal partnerships consists of three crucial phases: 1) pre-feasibility assessment; 2) formulation and design in joint programmes, and 3) consolidation including 'training of trainers'. At the end of each phase, partners explicitly decide whether or not to proceed with the collaboration. An important point in ITC's strategy is the fact that it seeks relatively strong partners in the South for establishing networks in education and training which are partly staffed by ITC alumni. In this context Molenaar & Beerens refer to the shift from 'building capacity' to 'building on capacity' (p. 5).

The group of Northern academics pleaded for a stronger focus on research cooperation with third-world partners. And they were of the opinion that research collaboration with institutes in developing countries should be one of the core activities for universities and research institutes in Europe. This plea was generally supported, yet the issue of financing academic research appeared more difficult to resolve. Participants took a balanced view on the issue of funding. According to some, Northern science or research bodies should support international research involving institutes in the North and South. These bodies ought to be seen as important stakeholders in the discussions on development-related collaborative research and they should be prepared to invest in this type of collaboration.

The donor group also addressed this question, though fairly implicitly, when they recognized the need for better coordination with the ministries of education, to ensure that Northern internationalization policies and financing strategies in higher education will not have detrimental effects on research cooperation with Southern partners. Actually this refers not only to research issues but also to other issues of policy coherence like the brain drain and fellowship programmes. Despite considerable (implicit) discussion on the topic of financing, no consensus was reached at the conference and no recommendations were formulated on this issue.

There was a general agreement that the Southern research agenda has to be the leading agenda for the research cooperation. Many participants emphasized the need for high-quality research and a proper working environment for researchers. These were seen as the most critical pre-conditions to achieve efficient and effective long-term cooperation. Well-connected centres of excellence were seen as a way of creating these necessary conditions.

Another important issue discussed during the conference was the need to recognize the importance of access to institutional archives: theses and papers should be made freely available to the global academic community. Some institutes, such as MIT<sup>7</sup>, provide online materials free of cost which are easily accessible. On the other hand, the trend towards privatization of higher education and research would seem to oppose the trend towards knowledge sharing. The conflict between openness and the protection of organizations' own interests should be addressed otherwise networks are likely to be unviable.

Other obstacles to cooperation include the fact that higher education institutes are in competition for resources, staff, and foreign and domestic students. Both Nilsen and Berlamont observe that it is increasingly difficult to motivate young researchers and professors to participate in development cooperation activities. The 'publish or perish' culture and the increased competition for research funds, academic positions and promotion force them to give priority to research. Academic recognition of cooperation efforts is still some way off (Berlamont, p. 5).

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<sup>7</sup> Massachusetts Institute of Technology

### *3.2 Cross-border education and the role of ICT*

During the conference, international cooperation through ICT networks and cross-border education was discussed only to a limited extent. However, various papers addressed these issues in depth and interesting experiences are being reported.

In this section some of the major findings and recommendations contained in the papers are briefly discussed. The experiences are derived from the cases described by Robinson, Molenaar & Beerens, Molendijk & Scholten and Gijzen.

The papers underline once more that new information and communication technology (ICT) is fundamentally changing the academic landscape. ICT opens up new opportunities in the ways education is delivered, students learn, lecturers teach, researchers work together, international collaboration takes place and courses are marketed. New possibilities are also emerging in other fields of educational activity such as joint reviews, despite the occasional technical limitations (bandwidth, etc.) in the South. It allows supervisory staff from both partner organizations to co-teach and monitor the quality of teaching at a distance. Simultaneously, it enables individual support to course participants – and therefore allows for the development of distance-learning modalities. That distance learning is popular and on the increase is shown by the experiences of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. Of all award holders, 38% are already being supported through a distance-learning scholarship. This route was only introduced in early 2003 in the UK (Kirkland and Jenkins: 2).

Digital forums make it easier for students to discuss course material and answer questions from other students and they improve contact between staff and students. The papers describe examples of international ICT-based, cross-border teaching and learning networks like UNIGIS (Molendijk & Scholten) and the cooperation between the Tufts, Makerere and Dar es Salaam universities (Robinson).

UNIGIS<sup>8</sup> is an international network of universities cooperating in the design and delivery of part-time distance learning in spatial information management and technology. The programme was founded in 1990 and the network has since expanded into a worldwide group of seventeen universities that offer UNIGIS courses on a franchise basis. At present, over 1,500 professionals from more than 40 different countries annually enrol at one of the universities of the network in order to participate in the UNIGIS programme (Molendijk & Scholten: 1).

The Tufts-Makere-Dar es Salaam programme aims at establishing Curriculum CoDevelopment (CCD) – a network-based model for teaching and learning between the three universities. The network described by Gijzen for the PoWER projects is basically a human network in which partially ICT-based distance-learning applications are in existence or under development.

Despite the opportunities, the authors also mention the challenges involved in ICT-based online teaching and learning. Obstacles (both in the South as well in the North) to developing and maintaining online educational networks are emerging. The problems basically relate to three different key aspects of online learning and teaching:

- technology (maintenance and finance of hardware, software platforms, and bandwidth);
- organization (technical and administrative support for development and maintenance of networks, and synchronization); and
- teaching methods (interactive teaching and learning, tutors as moderators, the incorporation of student-based educational methods).

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<sup>8</sup> Network of Universities Co-Operating in the Design and Delivery of Distance Learning in GIS

Robinson mentions the following pre-conditions for successful ICT-based programmes (p. 13): 1) sufficient bandwidth; 2) motivated technical support staff and 3) the existence of a business plan with realistic budget specifications.

Another real challenge regards the accreditation of cross-border education and quality assurance of teaching programmes. The fact that partner organizations are bound to stick to local or national regulations implies that joint programmes should comply with the national standards of all partners involved. One way out could be the certification of each component of the joint programme by the partner who delivered the component: the credits accumulated by students through those partners are then accepted by the institute which awards the degree (Molenaar & Beerens: 7).

Despite the cited promising experiences, there is a need for more evidence as to the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of online educational courses, programmes and/or networks. More evaluation studies or reviews, particularly in university development cooperation, are required in order to gain more transparency in the output and effects of online educational networks.

## **4 Conclusions and key issues**

- Few Northern universities – except for the university-based and specialized international education and university development centres – have explicitly integrated development cooperation in their overall institutional policies. At the same time, many of them have been involved in development cooperation activities for a long time.
- The reasons for Northern higher education institutes to be involved in international cooperation and research with developing countries are manifold. Important reasons are collaborative research, access to students and brains, expansion of educational delivery across borders, and opportunities for student and staff exchanges. In addition, ethical reasons for being involved in development cooperation are still prevalent amongst Northern higher education institutes. But almost everywhere, commercial interests are becoming increasingly important as reasons for embarking on international cooperation in higher education, particularly with emerging countries in Asia and Latin America.
- The commercialization of education and research seems to be widening the gap between stronger and weaker institutes in the South. In the development of joint courses through networks and the establishment of offshore campuses, Northern institutes are looking for partners with existing capacity or good potential for growth. For strategic reasons, preference may be given to starting with relatively stronger partners in order to generate more impact and to be better able to serve the weaker institutes at a later stage (Molenaar & Beerens and Gijzen).
- There is general agreement among Northern academics and practitioners that there should be mutual benefits in partnerships and networks because these form the basis for effective cooperation and sustainable relationships between the partners. However, business aspects should not be overlooked in networks and partnerships. Particularly in those cases where the outcomes of a network or partnership are uncertain from the start, it is advisable for partners to conduct a risk analysis or even draw up a business plan when they embark on such a venture (Copland, Molenaar & Beerens).
- The Northern academics and practitioners accept that when partnerships are financed (partly or fully) with development funds, they should contribute to capacity development in the South and ultimately to poverty reduction. However, in their opinion there should always be enough opportunities to pursue their academic interests as well.
- Development-oriented departments within Northern universities are experiencing growing pressure to justify their participation in development cooperation activities (Nilsen, Berlamont, Copland). If

they cannot deliver research output of high quality, their activities will be questioned internally. It is therefore strategically important to have development research occupy a more prominent position on the universities' agendas, leading to what PIE calls 'knowledge products', in order to cater for Northern higher education interests as well.

- ICT-based cross-border education and research has promising capacity-building potential. Various authors see clear advantages: enrichment of local curricula (in content and methodology), new opportunities in knowledge sharing and management, diversification of the local curriculum, and increased accessibility to specific information. But real difficulties exist and have to be overcome, such as the dominance of one language of instruction, bandwidth, high drop-out rates, quality control problems and the accreditation of courses.