

The visions, policies and programmes of a sample of Northern donors regarding their support for higher education development in the South.

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1 Introduction

1.1 *Why an overview?*

Prior to the conference, Nuffic decided to prepare a background paper which would bring together visions, policies and programmes from a sample of Northern donors regarding their support for higher education development in the South. The focus was on programmes that have the specific aim of developing higher education capacity in developing countries and that explicitly involve the higher education sector in the North. By presenting this overview, Nuffic wanted to sketch a picture of the current state of affairs. The main questions which guided the compilation of information were the following:

- why and how do donors practise development cooperation?
- why do donors support higher education development in the South?
- what are donors' policies regarding higher education development in the South?
- which programmes for higher education development in the South do donors support?

For some donors answers to a fifth question have been added. This question concerns trends in visions, policies and programmes which have taken place or which seem to be underway. Answers to this question were given by experts in the donor countries as part of a questionnaire survey Nuffic conducted in 2003¹.

The compilation did not pretend to be exhaustive although Nuffic tried to collect information from a representative sample of the international donor community. Multilateral and bilateral donors were included, as well as public and private entities and donors – both large and small – from three different continents. In all, information was gathered on the programmes of two multilateral donors, one private foundation, and bilateral donor agencies in 13 countries. For practical reasons, the information was gathered from websites and information sources that were readily available. The texts are mainly taken from donor's websites as these present both the latest and most concise information today, and sometimes from other policy documents. Annex 1 lists the countries/organizations and the sources of information that were consulted.

The information thus gathered was then used to compare the visions, policies and practice of all donors by asking the following questions: What appear to be common denominators, which donors take a different stand and why, how consistent are the visions, policies and practices, which innovative approaches have been introduced and is there anything that can be said about the effectiveness of the approaches that have been implemented over the past few years?

These questions and their firm or tentative answers are discussed in the next two chapters. Chapter three concludes with a concise tentative agenda for future research and actions.

1.2 *Some definitions*

In order to clarify some of the terminology, it might be helpful to know that Nuffic used the following working definitions for this overview.

Higher Education

We simply mean all education that is not primary or secondary. To us, it is equal to tertiary education and post-secondary education. One basic feature of higher education is that you need to have

¹ Conducted by Rob Stronkhorst, Senior Researcher, Internationalisation Department, Nuffic

completed secondary education or have gained an equivalent level through work experience in order to gain admission. Higher education in this definition encompasses public and private providers, research universities, professional training institutes and theme-based schools. It is also about higher education capacity, meaning all the individuals who study and function at higher education level.

Higher Education Sector

Apart from all providers of higher education, a few of whom are mentioned above, the higher education sector in many cases also encompasses other entities working in or with higher education, like ministries, regional and local governments and sometimes designated NGOs. This can get confusing, because potentially it broadens the field enormously.

Higher Education Programmes

Consequently, we use the term Higher Education Programmes to narrow down the field. A programme means that the donor has explicitly set aside part of his funding for the development of higher education institutions and/or capacity in the South. Equally important, in our definition a higher education programme normally involves higher education providers in the South and/or in the North. The following two combinations are most common:

- a higher education provider in the South collaborating with or being assisted by a higher education provider in the North (any linkage programme)
- a higher education provider in the North providing courses or training to organisations and/or individuals in the South (fellowship programmes)

Other combinations are possible, and they sometimes do occur, e.g. a Northern consultant assisting a higher education institute in the South within the framework of a higher education programme.

Higher Education Development

The important thing is, however, that the development of higher education providers and capacity should at the very least be one of the prime objectives of these higher education programmes. Basically, higher education development is about institution-building and capacity-building at post-secondary level in developing countries.

2 Analysis: Similarities and Differences

In this chapter, the most important similarities and differences between the visions, policies and practices of donors are highlighted. Some of the more general outcomes of this comparison are the following observations.

Follow the leader: although the whole world may judge the World Bank and its methods, we all listen when it speaks. The two reports on higher education that the World Bank has published in the past ten years have had a profound impact on the visions, policies and practices of all donor countries and agencies. Not only is a well-functioning higher education system considered a necessary condition for (economic) development, but institution and capacity building in general are acknowledged as prime goals of development cooperation. The questions that remain to be answered are: Is the World Bank right this time? How critical do we need to be now that it is finally speaking our language?

Everybody loves MDG: Linked to the above are the Millennium Development Goals. All donors subscribe to the principles and outcomes of the MDG. Many design their policies around several or more of the goals. All declare that the agenda is ambitious but that we should stick to it as much as possible. Progress to date is not overwhelmingly reassuring. Perhaps the MDG should be judged more as a brave attempt at donor coordination and vision-building than as a realistic plan for change. At least it has led all donors to review their policies and practice.

It's the trade, stupid: The whole world has known for ages that trade and investment are, in the end, far more important drivers of economic growth than development cooperation could ever be. But recently, many donors, especially European ones, have been actively trying to break down trade barriers. Moreover, they are actually looking at the coherence of their policies in areas affecting the South and taking action to prevent counterproductive actions. Of course, there is still a long way to go.

It's your call, but...: All donors will avow the importance of shared responsibility and ownership in the South. And beyond the rhetoric, there has been genuine progress in transferring responsibilities, decision-making power and funds to stakeholders in the South. The catch is that donors still set the conditions for these partnerships. They decide who is fit for and capable of becoming a partner. Good governance, democracy, human rights, and today anti-terrorism are the buzzwords. Score well on these items as a developing country, and you are in.

Let's see whether this button works: It may be a question of growing insight into the root causes of underdevelopment and of growing evidence of solutions that work in practice, but a cynic could say that development cooperation is a decades-long process of trial and error with piecemeal progress at best. Today's fashion can become tomorrow's joke. Trends appear to be important in development cooperation and in higher education development. Nowadays, focus on sectors, concentration of assistance on a limited number of countries, emphasis on the personal responsibility of recipient countries (expressed both as good governance and as ownership), and of course the direct link between development cooperation and the fight against world-wide polarisation are hot topics. So almost every donor has incorporated these principles into its policies and programmes. Evidence that the current approaches work is not abundant – but maybe it is too early to come up with an informed assessment.

Haven't we met before: Interestingly, but not uncommon in fashion, some concepts and approaches seem to be making a comeback. Prime among these is the developmental university. In the seventies and eighties, the (national) university was seen as a key player in the nation-building process of newly independent states, providing their leaders and visions. Today, the developmental university has been replaced by the higher education sector but this sector is expected to play a similar pivotal role in the development of knowledge economies. In the light of ongoing globalization, developments in information and communication technology and the general demise of the importance of nation-states, the emphasis on a purely national capacity development strategy may be questioned. Nevertheless, almost all donors support this strategy through budget support, bilateral funding, multilateral funding and targeted actions.

2.1 Development cooperation: purpose and methods

Looking at the reasons donors give for being involved in development cooperation, three different purposes can be discerned. It is important to note that these three purposes can exist alongside one another. Most donors will list at least two of the three purposes as their drive to give development aid.

a) it is in their interests

This obvious argument for giving development aid is still mentioned by almost all donors as one of their prime reasons. European donors in particular list this as the most important reason, sometimes linked to the notion that it is the moral duty of a rich country to help others. Interestingly, these same donors are the ones that traditionally have the highest contributions when official development assistance (ODA) is taken as a percentage of the gross national income (GNI).

b) it is in the world's interests

This reason has grown in importance over the past decade. A score of different arguments are used under this general header. For some donors, development aid can help mitigate growing disparities in the world, for some, it can help to win the fight against terrorism. Others may be looking more at the economic benefits, and argue that in an interdependent, globalized world, development cooperation can be of use in diminishing migration and in creating more opportunities for trade and investment. Finally, some may look at health and environmental issues, which have a global effect and should therefore be dealt with at a global level. Development cooperation is then one of the instruments.

c) it is in our own interests

An argument that has always played a role but could not be voiced until the 1990s, is that development cooperation should have benefits for the donor and its supporters. Today, there are several donors (Australia, Canada, the USA and the UK) who clearly state that their development aid is given because it accrues financial and other benefits for themselves. This can take the form of greater political influence, an improved regional position, work and income for donor-related project implementers, and fringe benefits (e.g. when thousands of fellowship holders stream into the local economy each year). This argument has become important in defending why a national donor should give part of its annual budget to assist in the development of other countries. It is interesting to note that this argument is used most clearly in the English-speaking world.

The overarching goal linking all three visions is that development cooperation should contribute to poverty alleviation or even its eradication. The Millennium Development Goals are the most outspoken expression of this vision, which today is shared by all donors.

This congruence can, as a result, also be found in most of the approaches and cooperation modes. The eleven most visible features are discussed below.

1) consistency and coherence

Although there are semantic differences, increasingly, consistency and coherence appear to mean the same: taking into account the implications of one policy on other related policies and activities. Consistency of development cooperation policies and activities with other policies and actions, notably in the fields of trade, commerce, investments, environment and foreign policy, is no longer just a pious vow made by donors. There are clear results, especially from northern European donors, who, within the European Union, for example, work hard to get rid of government subsidies for European agriculture and for the eradication of tariff barriers. The same goes for issues like debt relief and the distribution of medicine in the South. As Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation Van Ardenne explained in a recent interview: "On the European level, we have to ask ourselves with each new decision that is made: how will this affect developing countries? How can we rule out negative effects? Or better yet: how can we guarantee that every new policy will have positive consequences for developing countries?" (CBI News Bulletin, January/February 2005, No 301, p.5).

2) coordination

Coordination is closely linked to the issue of consistency. It is one thing to be consistent as a donor but real, positive effects are only reached when we all walk in the same direction. Donor coordination has been an important issue for decades, but today it seems that, at least at the highest level, donors are really trying to streamline their policies and initiatives. Again, the MDG are the most visible example. It is not yet clear, however, in how far progress at an overall policy level has trickled down to the more practical levels, e.g. coordination at country or sectoral level.

3) concentration

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 by focusing, more can be accomplished. All donors except the World Bank are also concentrating their aid on a limited number of sectors. The choice of sectors is decided by the needs and policies of the recipient countries, and on the other hand by the strengths and interests of the donor.

4) sectoral (or sector-wide) approach

Closely linked to the above, once a sector has been chosen, all donors try to work sector-wide. Taking the education sector as an example, this would mean that any given donor would not limit its support to building rural primary schools, for example, but it would also assist a regional teacher training college to update and improve its curricula.

5) ownership

The whole world agrees that development is essentially an internally driven process and that others can only contribute to this development by creating the right conditions. This means that it should be logical that the prime ownership for the development process, and for all interventions taking place within the framework of development cooperation, should lie with developing countries. But there is another angle, and that is the interest of stakeholders in the North. In order to keep these stakeholders interested in participating in development cooperation activities, the North should also be given ownership, at least partially. Moreover, because these partners often have the experience and expertise that developing countries need, the transfer of ownership should be considered rather than Southern ownership right from the outset. Therefore, shared ownership is the most common practice among donors, although there are clear moves towards transferring ownership to the South, e.g. through direct budget support. The sector-wide approach also places much more emphasis on the vision, needs and wishes of local parties.

6) demand-led programming

Part and parcel of modern thinking about development cooperation is demand-led programming. All donors adhere to the principle that the needs and demands of developing countries should not only be taken into account but should form the basis of any intervention strategy. There is, however, a gap between theory and practice. First of all, many donors, like Finland, France, Austria and the Netherlands, point out that useful cooperation is only possible when demands can be matched by what the donor has to offer. In this way, a conditionality is introduced. Secondly, donors who want to use their development cooperation programmes to involve their own constituencies, like Australia and Belgium, may go one step further and take the available offer as their starting point and match this with matching demands. All in all, there is a clear trend towards a more demand-led approach across the board because of the importance of (at least shared) ownership by the South.

7) good governance

All donors agree that it is extremely important to take governance into account in development cooperation. Creating an enabling environment for sustainable development is in no small part dependent on local governing structures. That is why all donors emphasize good governance. Some,

like Sweden, the EU and the Netherlands have made good governance at all levels and in all programmes and projects one of their prime targets.

8) financing modes

The financing modes for development cooperation by and large remain intact. Bilateral and multilateral funding and support through NGOs and local agents are the main instruments. Multilateral support has become more important for many donors. Also, direct government-to-government budget support has increased considerably over the past decade. As a result, programme and project funding receive less priority.

9) untying of aid

The untying of aid is a highly debated issue. Most donors support the principle but there are very few that actually have untied (part of) their aid. The UK and Denmark have taken the lead in this process. The current problem is that the unilateral untying of aid may not be all that effective, in the sense that it may distort markets rather than open them up. It is also clear that donors who view their programmes as a way of involving their own constituencies and providing them with (business) opportunities will be less likely to untie.

10) cost-sharing

Another financial issue concerns cost-sharing. For some donors, especially the Anglophone countries, the World Bank, Norway and the EU, this is the rule. It is expected that both receiving parties in the South and partners from the North should finance part of the programmes and projects. The idea is of course that by involving partners financially, their commitment is enhanced and their ownership enlarged. Other donors have a more varied policy in this regard, sometimes financing all inputs. This is especially the case when involving Northern partners is seen as a consultancy assignment, which, in principle, accrues financial benefits only.

11) length

Finally, in view of all of the above, it should not come as a surprise that short-term project interventions tend to be out of fashion. All donors have a long-term outlook as far as their support to certain countries and certain sectors is concerned. It is also recognized that sustainable development takes more than a three-year project. Interventions may still be short, but then a series of short interventions within the framework of a larger development scheme takes place.

2.2 *The reasons to develop higher education*

First, it is important to note that all donors support the development of higher education in developing countries. All donors finance programmes and projects dealing with the building-up and reinforcement of training, education and research at the tertiary level.

Four different reasons can be distinguished as to why donors want to develop higher education. As with the purposes of development cooperation, these reasons are not mutually exclusive. The influence of the two World Bank reports on higher education is noteworthy. All donors state that one of the reasons for developing higher education is that a well-functioning higher education sector is crucial for the development of knowledge societies. Some, like Finland, link this statement to the development of their own country through higher education development as a kind of proof of the validity of the argument.

More than half of the donors will then follow the World Bank's conclusions and state that the development of the higher education system is crucial for the overall development of the education sector (the ones that are not so outspoken about it, seem to subscribe to the principle). All donors wholeheartedly support the Education-for-All strategy but most will clearly state that this does not mean that they will only support basic education.

Some donors will go beyond these two generally accepted reasons. They say that supporting higher education development in the South is also important for their own higher education sector. Countries like Norway, Belgium, Canada and Australia want to offer their universities the opportunity to participate in development activities, to maintain and expand expertise in development issues and to keep them committed.

Finally, a few donors support higher education development because it informs their own policy-making. Norway and Belgium use part of their higher education support budget to involve their own universities in research and evaluations with the explicit aim of improving their own interventions.

2.3 Policy and programmes regarding higher education development

What applies to development cooperation as a whole also applies to higher education development. Therefore, instead of reiterating each of the points mentioned under 2.1, this section will be used to give examples of how different donors implement the appropriate shared principles.

1) consistency and coherence

Similarly to overall development cooperation, consistency and coherence issues are important in higher education development. All donors have clear policies that stimulate the consistency of higher education development programmes with other development initiatives they sponsor. Moreover, there is a tendency to link different programmes in the higher education sector. This can either take the form of a series of interventions or the merging of sub-programmes into a larger scheme.

2) coordination

Whereas donor coordination has become a serious issue at the overall development cooperation level, it is not (yet) so visible in higher education development. In principle, each donor runs its own programmes, irrespective of the programmes of other donors. At the local level, however, coordination of initiatives does take place. This is especially true in institutional development programmes, in which it can be possible that several donors support the same institution or work in the same sub-sector. It can then be the initiative of the Southern institution or of some donors to set up a regular meeting and/or create a network in order to coordinate and even streamline the different interventions.

3) concentration

All higher education development programmes, except those from multilateral donors, are concentrated on a limited number of countries. In the Netherlands, for example, the number of eligible countries for fellowship support has been reduced from 103 to 56, while in the institutional cooperation programme the official number of countries is 56 but, in practice, cooperation is only with fifteen countries. In Australia, the fellowship programmes are mainly limited to Asia and the Pacific, in this way reinforcing Australia's position in the region.

4) sectoral (or sector-wide) approach

As with concentration, the sector-wide approach is part and parcel of higher education development programmes today. In most cases, the higher education programmes have to take account of or be in line with the sectors chosen. Sweden can be considered a good example of the way in which higher education programmes are instrumental to the sectoral approach. This donor has decided that all fellowships should directly be linked to sectoral projects.

5) ownership

There is a basic division regarding ownership between fellowship programmes and institutional development programmes. As a rule, fellowship programmes are owned by Northern donors and organizations, especially in terms of finances. An exception to this rule is when donors work with a designated budget per country. In such cases, this budget can be handed over to governments in the

South in order to 'buy' training programmes in the Northern country. This is happening in the USA and in Australia.

Institutional development programmes tend to give a more mixed view. In some cases, ownership rests primarily with the Northern institutions but increasingly it is shared. Full local ownership in the South of an institutional development programme could not be found.

6) demand-led programming

The demand from the South leads the organization and implementation of ever more higher education development programmes. In most cases, this demand is bound by certain conditions and thresholds that the donor and the Northern institutions set. In that sense, full demand orientation is not yet achieved. But, in programmes of the Ford Foundation, the Netherlands and Sweden, for example, the demand is leading in many ways. However, there are also clear examples of programmes in which the Northern country sets the pace: fellowship programmes in Australia, the UK, Austria and France for example, in which the offer is clear and is leading in how the programme is implemented; and institutional development programmes in Belgium, the UK and Norway, in which Northern partners are requested to take the lead and send in cooperation proposals.

7) good governance

The governance of higher education institutions and organizations working in the higher education sector is an integral part of most higher education development programmes. One interesting example is the German programme the 'Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies'. This programme is meant for managers of higher education institutions in the South and it aims to acquaint them with the latest developments and innovations in their fields.

8) untying of aid

The untying of higher education development programmes is not widespread. Denmark offers candidates the possibility of looking for a suitable study place in the UK when they cannot find one in Denmark in their fellowships programme. The UK has untied its development research programme, meaning that foreign entities can tender for research funding that previously was only meant for UK institutions. As could be expected, this has aroused a storm of protest in the UK. The basic critique was that untying should never be done unilaterally.

9) cost-sharing

A distinction can be made between single and multi-purpose cooperation programmes. An example of a single purpose programme is the Dutch cooperation programme called NPT. It is a demand-driven programme which funds post-secondary education and training capacity strengthening in developing countries. Dutch institutions are contracted to co-implement projects for the benefit of institutions in the South. The Dutch institutions are fully compensated for their services. In multi-purpose programmes the projects not only serve the interests of organizations in developing countries but also those of the Northern institutions as the projects give them opportunities for collaborative research and staff and student exchanges. Because of the shared interests, the Northern institutions are requested to make a substantial financial contribution, usually in the form of staff salaries. The UK, Belgian and Norwegian programmes are based on a cost-sharing principle.

In addition to the observations made above, there are some other features of higher education development programmes that deserve attention. First of all, the focus of the interventions is important. As was mentioned above, many programmes have the implicit or explicit objective of contributing to organizational development and/or institution-building. This has led to a shift in the type of projects and the type of support. In the last decade or so it has become usual that higher education development programmes sponsor projects which are aimed at reinforcing management, for example, or at building or expanding infrastructure and reinforcing support structures. The cooperation does not need to have an academic focus alone. Moreover, several fellowship programmes are now

aimed at contributing to organizational development in the South by training staff of those organization in the North. The Netherlands Fellowship Programmes are one of the most far-reaching initiatives in this respect, in that multi-year agreements can be signed with organizations in the South for the training of their staff. In this way, the boundaries between “pure” institutional development programmes and ‘pure’ HRD programmes become blurred.

However, fellowship programmes that primarily focus on individual capacity-building are still present. The UK, Belgium, and the Ford Foundation are but a few donors who still focus on the individual. Moreover, some donors focus on research capacity building. The difference with the above two categories is that these programmes are only meant for building or reinforcing research in the South. Finally, some programmes are primarily aimed at reinforcing cooperation and building networks. These programmes hope that by stimulating collaboration in multilateral and multinational entities each of the parties involved will be able to grow.

Another feature concerns the roles of different stakeholders in the administration of the higher education development programmes and in the decision-making process. These stakeholders are governments and other donor agencies, intermediary organizations, and higher education institutions in the North and the South. The organisation of higher education development programmes differs considerably from country to country.

In countries like Australia, Austria, Denmark, France and Sweden, the government (or a government agency) is directly responsible for administration and decision-making regarding its higher education programmes. The advantage is that it is potentially easier to fit in the higher education programmes with other development initiatives. At the same time, there can be a gap between government intentions and perceptions and the daily reality in the higher education sectors in the North and the South.

A second model involves an independent intermediary organization. Canada, the Netherlands, the UK, Germany and France, for example, have such an arrangement. The intermediary organization is concerned in particular with the implementation and daily decision-making of the programmes. The advantage of this arrangement is that the intermediary organization is full acquainted with the higher education sector and that the administrative burden is taken off the back of the donor. On the other hand, involving an intermediary organization can lead to extra red tape. Moreover, intermediary organization can become ‘mini-donors’, thereby making it more difficult for implementers to get things done.

Finally, in some cases a large part of the administration of higher education programmes has been handed over to (consortia of) higher education institutions in the North. This is the case in Norway and Belgium. The obvious advantage is that the institutions involved have a direct say and a direct interest in running the programme as effectively as possible. However, there is the inherent danger that the institutions will mix up the different hats they wear, thereby confusing Southern partners, and, in the worst case scenario, altering the goals of the programme for their own benefit.

As far as is known, there is only one donor that has given Southern partners a decisive role in a higher education programme, and that is the private Ford Foundation. They collaborate with local organizations in the countries where they are active. These local organizations are responsible for outreach, selection and the placement of fellows. In many other programmes, Southern institutions do have a distinct role in the decision-making and administrative processes but this role is limited to certain aspects. For example, in the Netherlands organizations in the South are part of the tender evaluation committee and have the right of veto. In this way, they have prime responsibility in choosing their partners. In some programmes, contracts are signed with both partners or, alternatively, with the partner in the South only, thereby giving them prime responsibility for the success of the project.

Finally, something can be said about the matching of partners in cooperation programmes and in institutional development programmes. Basically, there are two models: consensus and tender. In the consensus model, partners supposedly know each other before the implementation starts. Most often,

they submit joint proposals for financing. Moreover, it is often the Northern partner that has taken the initiative of setting up the collaboration. In a tender model, this potential disadvantage is dispensed with. The Southern organizations have the initiative and the Northern partners have to submit proposals which are aimed at solving the problem of the Southern organization. In principle, tendering promotes ownership by the South and enhances the quality of the proposals. At the same time, the tendering process is often arduous and the outcome can still be manipulated to a certain extent, especially when the market is not very big. Furthermore, it may take time for partners who have not worked together before, to become acquainted. This in turn may lead to a slow start to the projects.

3 Linking vision, policy and practice

3.1 Consistency issues

It can be concluded that all donors have established clear and logical links between their visions, policies and practices regarding higher education development. When a donor solely or primarily aims at supporting higher education in developing countries, its programmes are geared towards this aim. The role of Northern partners will be relatively small, ownership shared and the demand leading. Institutional development programmes are the most important means of achieving this goal.

When a donor explicitly wants its funding to be of use for its own constituency as well, this is taken into account in its programmes: these programmes are led by the offer, Northern institutions can take the lead. Fellowship programmes are still the prime means of achieving this goal, because fellows study in the Northern country thereby ensuring that the funding stays in-country.

At an overall level, there is one question that remains to be answered: why is it that two donors with similar visions and policies regarding higher education development opt for different programmes to materialize that vision? In some cases, fellowship or capacity building programmes are chosen, in some cases, institutional cooperation programmes form the core of the assistance. This question can not be answered within the framework of this inventory, but the answer could shed more light on the link between policy and practice.

3.2 Innovative approaches

In the descriptions of all higher education development programmes, some programmes stand out because they provide new answers to old questions or because they provide new answers to new questions. A few of these innovative approaches are highlighted below, as a source of inspiration.

Focus on outcomes

In Germany, the alumni programme and equipment grants are clear examples of programmes focusing on the outcomes level. Both programmes are open to individuals and organisations that previously benefited from DAAD support. In this way, Germany keeps the link with beneficiaries alive, and at the same time provides small funds so that there is a better chance that the original investment will yield effects.

A similar initiative has been taken by Belgium, which has developed the South Initiatives. Again, organisations and individuals who already have a link with VLIR because of previous support can send in proposals for small, designated projects with a view to enhancing the effects of earlier interventions. In the Netherlands, the refresher courses of the Netherlands Fellowships Programme serve a similar goal, although the initiative for organising these courses has been with Dutch providers to date.

A common feature of these approaches is that their vision is for a long-term relationship, clearly to the benefit of Southern and Northern partners, but that the interventions themselves are small and short-term. This makes these instruments flexible.

Co-financing

The Chevening programme and the Higher Education Links programme in the UK are both very good examples of co-financing schemes. In the Higher Education Links programme, it has been estimated that the investment by the British government has been met with an investment 82 times higher by UK universities. Clearly, this approach can only work when there are considerable gains for contributing universities and when they have a large share in the decision-making process. In the Chevening programme, co-financing is not just sought from universities, but also from business and industry. Again, it is important to note that the Chevening programme is not a traditional development-oriented scholarship scheme. Its goal is to bring the brightest students from developing countries to the UK so that the UK economy can profit. At the same time, it is expected that substantial numbers of graduates will return to their own country. The effect of this type of approach is that much larger sums are available for higher education development programmes than if the government financed the schemes by itself.

The individual matters

Although there is a tendency to view institution-building as the prime goal of higher education development, even when the programme's objective is individual capacity-building, there are some programmes that take a different stand.

The Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program (IFP) focuses completely on the individual. The program is meant to educate (future) leaders in developing countries. It is not the organisation at which they work that has primary importance, but rather their personal leadership capacities, social commitment and academic excellence. The Ford Foundation takes this position because it believes that change requires educated leaders. By working in a completely demand-oriented way and with a truly global perspective, the Ford Foundation can effectively offer the best options to selected individuals.

Competition

A few years ago, the Netherlands introduced a form of competition in its higher education development programmes, requiring potential Dutch implementers to tender for participation in institutional development projects and tailor-made training projects. Of course, competition in itself is not a new phenomenon in higher education development. Especially in Anglophone countries, this element was introduced long ago. In the Netherlands, however, precursors of the current programmes were all based on the notion that long-term cooperation with higher education partners should be fostered, in order to keep the Dutch partners committed and because it was believed that building a relationship is a necessary condition for success. Introducing competition in regular higher education programmes in essence means that the Dutch higher education institutions are treated as consultancy firms. The effects of this approach on the commitment of the Dutch higher education sector to development cooperation and on the effectiveness of the interventions is not clear yet.

Untying aid

As was said before, the untying of aid in practice is not a very widespread phenomenon. In Denmark however, the DANIDA fellowships programme is partly untied. When applicants cannot find a study programme that matches their needs, they may search for a suitable programme in the UK. Of course, the programmes in the UK are complementary to the Danish offer, but the outcome of this policy is nevertheless that the tuition fee of a UK institution can be paid by the Danish government.

Germany has established the Sur place and Third Country scholarships. In this scheme, applicants from developing countries can use their scholarship for study in-country or in the region. This can also

be considered as an example of untying aid, because the funding is not spent in Germany and not at German institutions. The same goes for Australia with its Australian Regional Development Scholarships. This scheme provides opportunities for individuals from selected developing countries to study at selected education institutions outside Australia.

Sectoral approach

Most donors have streamlined their policies in such a way that the higher education development programmes have to be in line with or support the sector-wide approach. In many cases, this basically means that anything still goes (especially in fellowship programmes), but that there is a preference for projects linked to the chosen sectors in any given country or region. In this way, the sectoral approach is reinforced.

The Swedish International Training Programmes (ITP) are completely linked to the sectors Sweden supports. Key persons working in or with projects in these sectors are given the possibility to follow a training programme partly in Sweden and partly in their home country.

Research matters

There are few donors who explicitly focus on building research capacity in developing countries. Obviously, in institution-building projects, setting up a research programme can be part of the activities. Also, a PhD training programme is meant to build up a pool of researchers as well. But the only three donors devoting a considerable amount of their available funding to research programmes are Sweden, Denmark and Norway.

In these cases, the research capacity development is a joint effort, meaning that institutions in the South are assisted in getting a (better) research-orientation and on the other hand, the institutions in the North benefit because they can do research in and with the South and thus establish or enhance their status as a centre of excellence in their field of study.

2.3 What is effective?

In the past ten years all donors have reviewed their visions, strategies, policies and higher education programmes. In some cases, e.g. the World Bank, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and the UK, a major evaluation exercise has been carried out, leading to important adaptations in the way higher education programmes are designed and carried out.

One of the most striking observations from all the internal and external evaluations that have been carried out, is that they all found that it is difficult – if not impossible – to measure the effects and impact of interventions in the field of higher education development. This is due to several reasons.

First, the objectives and developmental goals of most projects were not formulated adequately, meaning that the direct objectives were not written down in a SMART way and that the link between the output and the desired outcomes of projects remained unclear. Moreover, in large interventions like World Bank programmes, the evaluators were “not able to document that these projects contributed to economic growth, poverty reduction, or the Millennium Development Goals” because there was no evidence available (Tertiary Education: Lessons from a Decade of Lending, FY 1990-2000; David Beck, 2002, World Bank, p. 5).

Second, indicators were often not formulated at all, and when they were formulated, they often did not provide correct information. This was partly due to the fact that in many cases the needs were not assessed well and the starting situation was not well measured. Without a clear picture of the current situation and without baseline data, it then became hard to indicate which changes could be viewed as signs of progress.

Third, monitoring and evaluation during the implementation of projects and programmes was often inadequate. Sometimes, there was no M&E framework, sometimes the activities were not carried out and frequently the conclusions and recommendations of M&E did not lead to desired changes in the project and programme implementation.

Finally, the environment in which higher education development projects and programmes take place was often not mapped adequately. Neither the conditions nor the risks were clear. Moreover, the potential effects of other developments taking place were not taken into account.

It therefore seems logical to ensure that the four causes that prevent a good assessment of the effectiveness of higher education development programmes are weeded out. In view of the increasing call for accountability and openness by taxpayers around the world, this is more than just a discussion that is internal to the sector. We should show what the effects are, or we might end up not having any possibility of creating effects at all.

Beyond the methodologies to ensure a better description and measurement of the effectiveness of higher education development programmes, it is also important to understand what effectiveness means.

Basically, there are two approaches:

- a) *Reaching the pre-determined objectives of a project means the project has been effective*

This is an instrumental approach, which presupposes a thorough needs assessment, baseline study and inventory of conditions and risks. Project objectives and goals are based on this information, and can therefore be considered realistic. Because there is a direct link between project output and project outcomes, reaching the objectives of the project can be considered as proof that the project has contributed towards reaching larger developmental goals.

- b) *Project results that can be and are applied, means the project has been effective*

This is a more pragmatic approach, which takes into account that during the project implementation, realities may change and therefore project output and project outcomes may need adaptation as well. It presupposes good monitoring and formative evaluation practices, based on realistic indicators. In addition, this approach takes the final reality into account, looking not only at the applicability of results but also at their actual application.

It is very important to note that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive. It is probably true that both approaches reinforce each other. The first will lead to well-designed projects and programmes, while the second will allow for the necessary flexibility during implementation. Moreover, the first approach will provide information on the validity of the objectives and goals, while the second will look at the validity of the interventions.

In view of the above, it is clear that this document cannot state which types of higher education development programmes are effective, nor which ones are more effective than others. At the same time, from all the descriptions of donor policy and practice, there appear to be shared conditions for effectiveness.

1) Thorough needs assessment

Being fully informed and fully aware of the real needs and the current state of affairs, including baseline data, should at least accomplish two things: that all stakeholders start at the same level and from the same spot; and that the groundwork for good monitoring and evaluation is laid. The problem with needs assessment is that it is an arduous process that often does not lead to straight answers. Inevitably, perceptions and political realities come into play.

2) Concentrated interventions

Apart from large multilateral donors, no one can do it all. Northern countries can support neither all countries, nor all sectors. Donors have learned to become more modest. By focusing interventions, more can be done in those focus areas. This sounds logical, but it is very much a donor-perspective. For stakeholders in the South, the sector that is supported may not have clear boundaries. The growing interdependence between sectors may require them to take simultaneous actions in sectors not supported by Northern donors. Moreover, donor coordination is required in order to make concentrated interventions per donor truly effective. Finally, the question remains as to what happens with countries and sectors in which no donor and no government in the South is interested.

3) Shared ownership

The active and prolonged involvement of stakeholders in the North and in the South in designing and decision-making should lead to better results, because of the expected benefits: commitment, sharing of values and goals, making each party responsible for the decisions for which they should be responsible. But shared ownership may also lead to inconclusiveness: who is responsible in the end, who decides and who is to blame when something goes wrong? And then there is the more ideological point: shouldn't stakeholders in the South have the prime responsibility for their own development? It could well be that shared ownership is a step away from total donor-control towards full ownership by the South.

4) Long-term commitment

As said before, everybody agrees that development is a long-term process. Donors also agree that this requires a long-term commitment on their part. Implicit in this notion is that the focus of interventions should be on the effects, and not just on getting results. Maintaining this position, however, is difficult in an age of accountability and a general audience focus on quick gains and visible results.

5) Focus on the transfer of knowledge and skills

This condition seems so obvious, that it should not even need mentioning. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that the transfer of knowledge and skills should be part and parcel of every higher education development project and programme. In the past, sending experts who 'did their thing' still happened and no real capacity building took place. Today, all stakeholders involved are convinced that transfer should take a central position. What is still unclear, is what methodologies can best be used for an effective transfer. What is better: a long-term collaborative project involving joint research, for example, or a fellowship for a Master's degree study abroad or participation in a network of likeminded institutes?

6) Considerable flexibility

Finally, it pays to be flexible. Donors and implementers who are not responsive to changing circumstances and who are not capable of incorporating innovations can be sure of sub-optimal results and effects. A key lesson of any project, whether it is in higher education development or in building infrastructure, is that change in the wider environment and in the implementation of the project is bound to occur. What is important, is to plan for change while keeping in mind the original goals of the intervention.

3.4 *An agenda for the future*

This document is no more than a (partial) inventory of donors' visions, policies and practices regarding higher education development in the South. It does not provide definitive answers regarding what works best. As was elaborated above, it cannot do so, because of missing and inconclusive data. Moreover, there is no single road to success. Different models work in different circumstances.

The main question is: why do different higher education development models work in different circumstances? Is it because of a consistent and coherent approach based on the features described in 2.1, is it because the right type of innovation was implemented, is it because all conditions for effectiveness were fulfilled in the right way? Or is it more dependent on the human factor: the enthusiasm of the project leaders, the belief stakeholders have in what they do, the fact that the project implementers get along very well? Or is the environment in which the models are implemented the most important factor: do economic, political and social circumstances determine whether or not a higher education development intervention can be successful?

And if the answer lies in part or all of the above, the questions that need to be researched and discussed are:

- how can an internally and externally consistent approach be designed and implemented?
- how can we ensure that innovations in design, methodology and content are integrated into higher education development programmes?
- how can we ensure that the conditions for effectiveness are met? Can they all be met at the same time? And what exactly are these conditions – the ones mentioned in 3.3 may not be all?
- how can effectiveness be measured: which methodologies and instruments need to be in place, which approach need to be adopted?
- how can we take into account the (changing) circumstances in which higher education development programmes take place by default?

Answers to these questions already exist. In fact, there are too many answers, most of which are based on singular cases and anecdotal evidence. If we are to maintain our claim that higher education development is crucial for the sustainable development of the South, we need to back it up with substantial and proven outcomes of our interventions. We can all see that the landscape is changing: what is important is to get a better understanding of why and how we are changing it.

ANNEX 1. Information sources on the visions, policies and programmes of a sample of Northern donors regarding their support for higher education development in the South.

Australia

Sources: www.ausaid.gov.au

Austria

Sources: www.bmaa.gv.at/eza

Three-year programme 2004-2006 on Austrian development policy, revised version, Vienna 2004

Belgium

Sources:

1. website Directorate General for Development Cooperation: www.dgdc.be/en/index.html ; website Flemish Inter-University Council: www.vlir.be
2. DGDC: Website information; DGDC Annual report 2002; Political note of Secretary of State (1999-2003).

VLIR: IUC Annual Programme for 2002; Noord-Acties Programa 2002; Eigen Initiatieven-Programma 2002; Development Co-operation in Higher Education. A strategic review of international donor policy and practices (1999); University Development Co-operation. Study of appraisal, reporting, control and evaluation procedures (2002). How to handle intellectual property rights in UDC. Het vijfjarenplan van de VLIR voor de universitaire ontwikkelingssamenwerking van de Vlaamse universiteiten (2003-2007); Reconciling ethics, law and economics (2003)

Canada

Sources: Website CIDA: www.acdi-cida.gc.ca

Website AUCC: www.aucc.ca

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Canada/CIDA: CIDA's action plan on basic education (2002); Canada Making a difference in the world: a policy statement on strengthening aid effectiveness (2002); UPCD Program guidelines; CCPP Project Development Fund;

AUCC: AUCC's comments on CIDA's draft actionplan on Basic Education (2001?); Strengthening aid effectiveness through knowledge: the perspective of Canadian universities on renewing CIDA (2001)

Denmark

Sources: website Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs: www.um.dk

Education sector policy document, August 2001 Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Denmark:

Partnership 2000; A changing world: the government's vision for new priorities in Denmark's foreign policy (2003); Partnerships at the Leading Edge: Report of the Hernus Commission on

Development – Related Research Funded by Danida (A Danish Vision for Knowledge, Research and Development, 2001).

DANIDA (The Danish Agency for Development Cooperation which is a directorate under the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs); Annual Report 2002 of the DANIDA Fellowship Centre; ENRECA- the Danish bilateral programme for enhancement of research capacity in developing countries (Ilsoe & Rüdinger, 1995); Evaluation of the ENRECCA programme (2000).

European Union

Sources: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/>

Finland

Sources: <http://global.finland.fi>

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland: Finland's Development Cooperation 2002. Operationalisation of development policy objectives in Finland's international development cooperation (2001); Improving effectiveness of Finnish Development Cooperation.

Ford Foundation

Sources: www.fordfound.org

www.fordifp.net

France

Sources: www.diplomatie.gouv.fr

www.edufrance.fr

www.egide.fr

Germany

Sources: www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/index.html

www.daad.de

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Germany: development policy 2003 brochure; the German government's 11th Development Policy Report: "Development as policy as an element of global structural and peace policy";

The Netherlands

Sources: www.minbuza.nl

www.nuffic.nl/nfp

www.nuffic.nl/npt

Norway

Sources: www.odin.dep.no/ud/engelsk/
www.norad.no
www.siu.no

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Norway: The 2000 Development Aid Budget; The 2001 Development Aid Budget; Annual Report 2002: Focus on Norwegian Development Cooperation; Strategy for strengthening research and higher education in the context of Norway's relations with developing countries (1999). Fighting poverty: Norway's action plan 2015 for combating poverty in the South (2002); Education – Job number 1: Norwegian strategy for delivering education for all by 2015;

NORAD (The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation which is a directorate under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs);

SIU (The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher education) 2002; The NUFU programme: past, present and future (Manger, 2003);

Sweden

Sources: www.sida.se/Sida/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=107

United Kingdom

Sources: www.dfid.gov.uk
www.britishcouncil.org
www.chevening.com

The use of science in UK international development policy, 2004.

The higher education links scheme: review and possible future options for higher education partnerships, March 2003, Allsop, Bennell and Forrester

DFID: Eliminating World Poverty: making globalisation work for the poor (2000); DFID's mission statement (2003).

British Council. (2002). Annual Report 2001-2002; From Peril to Promise: how higher education can deliver (2002 seminar report); Chevening Scholarships Programme Annual Report 2001-02;

ACU: Commonwealth Scholarship 43rd Report.

United States of America

Sources: www.usaid.gov/our_work/education_and_universities/higher-ed.htm
www.aascu.org/alo/

World Bank

Sources: Website World Bank Group: www.worldbank.org

Constructing Knowledge Societies: New challenges for tertiary education, 2002