# Towards effective support to higher education and research in developing countries

Synthesis of the contributions to and the outcomes of 'A Changing Landscape'

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## 1 Introduction

The aim of 'A changing Landscape' was formulated in the subtitle: making support to higher education and research in developing countries more effective. To this end, seventy participants from all over the world came to The Hague, the Netherlands, from 23-25 May 2005. Experts from 26 countries[1] took part, representing eight different stakeholders groups:

1. Southern governments: representatives from Ministries of (Higher) Education and from Higher Education Commissions.
2. Southern managers: the managers of universities and polytechnics in the South.
3. Donor agencies: bilateral, multilateral and private foundations.
4. Northern administrators: programme administration organizations.
5. Northern academics: the managers of Northern universities and researchers.
6. Dutch academics: the managers and academics of Dutch higher education institutes.
7. Dutch practitioners: representatives of international cooperation offices of Dutch higher education institutes.
8. PhD students from the South, studying at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague.

In this paper the main outcomes of the discussions at the conference and the views and experiences contained in the papers which the experts submitted are presented and analysed. While doing so, the perspectives of the various stakeholder groups are constantly made explicit. First of all, the state of affairs in the South is explored by answering the questions: what are the challenges for higher education systems and what are the pros and cons of the various aid modalities?

Next, the motives of the donors are explored. Also, we ask to what extent donors deliver what is needed to the higher education sector in the South. After this, the state of affairs in the North is explored by looking at the motives of Northern institutes to be involved in cooperation programmes in the South.

The last section focuses on the outcomes of the conference; it provides the recommendations and the challenges that lie ahead for all stakeholders who want to contribute to better higher education systems in the South.

## 2 The state of affairs in higher education in the South

### 2.1 Challenges

The participants from the South depicted the constraints and opportunities in their higher education systems in a range of papers and in the discussions during the conference. The major challenges which governments and higher education institutes in the South are facing

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[1] Participants came from Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, Rwanda, South Africa, Sweden, Tanzania, Uganda, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Vietnam, Yemen and Zambia.

are listed below. The challenges are formulated as questions for which the right answers need to be found before we can expect higher education and research to play its essential role in national development processes.

Access

How can the higher education system be made accessible to all? How to improve the chances for women, for children from poor families and from poorer regions? This is not only a matter of justice, but also a matter of national interest. Human resources are the most valuable resource any country has and using this in the best possible way is the key to development.

Massification

How can the higher education system deal with the enormous growth in the number of students? How to finance this? How to ensure sufficient numbers of qualified lecturers?

Privatisation

Private funds are needed to pay for the increasing costs of higher education. Yet, how to attract these in a prudent way, i.e. without compromising the accessibility and quality of the education? How to prevent private funding leading to a divide in the educational system with wealthy private institutes operating alongside poorly financed public ones?

Commoditisation of (cross-border) higher education

Higher education has become a commodity: Northern countries use the GATS negotiations to try to create a free global market for higher education. The challenge for Southern countries is not to be flooded by second-rate, standard courses that do not fit the cultural setting or the socio-economic needs of the recipient country. How to ensure that 'off-shore' campuses of Northern institutes and twinning programs/joint degrees serve the national interest rather than only the individual students?

Quality assurance and maintenance

With a proliferation of (national, private, cross-border) institutes, quality control is crucial. How to ensure minimum quality standards and how to improve the quality of the education offered? How to set up regulatory bodies that are independent and strong, yet respect the autonomy of institutes? How to design regulations in such a way that they are relevant, practical and enforceable?

Relevance and the connection to the world of work

Too often curricula are insufficiently geared to the local circumstances. How to develop new curricula in conjunction with employers? How to avoid a simple 'copy and paste' approach that simply imports Northern values and ideas that are out of touch in the South?

Digital divide

New ICT application provide many opportunities, yet they demand huge investments as well. Without donor support (and private funds) many countries will not be able to make these investments. And once access is improved, how can the quality of internet based education be regulated? How to avoid an over-reliance on theoretical teaching materials that can be transmitted easily via e-mail, but which might have little practical meaning without guidance and practical assignments?

<u>International mobility of staff</u>

International mobility offers great learning and other opportunities for the individuals concerned, yet it can easily lead to a brain drain for the South. How can the drain be stopped? How can Southern countries at least be compensated for the financial costs incurred in the education of migrants? How to create better perspectives for well educated staff in the South?

<u>Trends in donor policies</u>

Donor support is indispensable for many countries; yet it has its price as well. Should it be delivered in the form of many small projects which requires huge coordination efforts? Or, should it be delivered in large World Bank projects or sector-wide approach programmes (SWAps), which gives donors better chances to enforce their conditions and modalities?

In the submitted papers, one can read even more challenges. These are, however, only the major ones and those that can be influenced by international cooperation.

The above challenges mainly represent the perspective of Southern policy makers. The challenges of the managers of Southern institutes are very much in line with these. However, they face other challenges as well: how to retain high quality staff, how to use the limited resources efficiently, how to balance the need to generate income from students with concerns on accessibility and equity?

They face many constraints in keeping in touch with the rest of the world. They need more contacts on scientific as well as educational issues and especially contacts with colleagues operating in similar environments: so more South-South contacts are called for as well as better access to the internet.

On the other hand, as the papers show, many reputable institutes in the South have, with support from donors, successfully implemented major reforms in the last decade. This gives hope for the future.

## 2.2 What sort of support is given?

The present state of affairs in the international debate on aid is clearly that governments are first and foremost responsible for the development of their country. Aid can be useful, but only if it is given in a context where good governance and sensible policies prevail. To some, this conclusion might be disappointing, for others it is obvious and only a welcome confirmation of the sovereignty of independent states.

While aid has its limitations, the question of which form of aid is most effective remains. The following support modalities have been used in higher education cooperation for decades:

- Budget support
- Institutional cooperation programmes
- Fellowship programmes
- Technical assistance
- Agreements

Each of these has it own advantages and limitations, as we explore now.

**Budget support** has been on the increase with the growing popularity of the SWAps among donors and recipients in the last decade. The main advantage of SWAps is that recipient countries can handle the support better as it is more coherent and in line with local policies

and approaches. This increases the feeling of ownership as well. The risk of the SWAps can be that a few donors (or their representatives) can gain substantial influence on a sector without having any legitimacy. For example, donors' pressure via a SWAp in education can lead to a (further) reluctance to finance higher education.

**Institutional cooperation programmes** refer to cooperation between higher educations institutes in the North with their counterparts in the South. In the context of such cooperation, a range of activities can be undertaken: joint research, joint education, exchange of students and staff, support to infrastructure, support to curriculum development and staff training, etc. This kind of cooperation is popular among Southern as well as Northern institutes as it connects similar institutes on the basis of shared interests. A major limitation is that such programmes often have multiple objectives (both in the South and the North), which makes it very hard to measure their effectiveness and efficiency. This creates problems for donors to justify the funding of these programmes, especially these days as ministers for development cooperation are held accountable by their parliaments and the general public to deliver concrete results in the South.

**Fellowship programmes** traditionally offer individuals from the South the opportunity to follow a training course or a degree programme in the North. For the individual concerned this is usually a very valuable period, both in intellectual terms as well as in terms of personal experience. The main limitations are that it is very costly and that there is a danger that the topics of the study are insufficiently relevant to the local situation and/or to the formal position of the trainee. Nowadays, more and more regional training opportunities are offered, provided by Northern and/or Southern institutes. Another trend is to offer more comprehensive support to Southern organisations based on their human resource development strategy. Training in the North can be part of that, as can also on-the-job and tailor-made training.

**Technical assistance** can involve project implementation, advisory services or secondment of staff. Technical assistance can be related to educational issues, as well as to organizational development or institutional aspects (e.g. how to set up a Public Private Partnership). Usually the assistance is provided by international consultants. The advantage is that there is a clear relation between what has to be done and the input used for this; the disadvantages are that it is expensive and there is a risk that local staff and experts are not sufficiently involved in the process. This means less mutual learning takes place and/or less transfer of knowledge and skills.

Lastly **international agreements** can be an instrument to support higher education. For example, Southern countries can seek special arrangements in the GATS negotiations. For this they need adequate information, and development research can play an important role in this. However, at the conference this was not an issue for discussion.

# 3   Donors and administrators

## 3.1  Motives for donors

Development aid is both an expression of international solidarity and a well understood expression of the North's own interests. Although aid is delivered via a wide range of channels, each having its own specific perspective and interest, the following general motives can be formulated for aid and for support programmes for higher education and research.

*Poverty alleviation and MDGs*

The fight against poverty is at the heart of any development support. Unfortunately poverty proves a persistent problem and as a result aid and the way it is delivered is increasingly criticised. In response, the international community formulated 18 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 in order to focus all aid on a limited number of clearly defined goals. The MDGs are a standard against which the impact of aid can be measured and they are used to mobilise (political) support for development aid. One of the MDGs is universal primary education (for boys and girls) by 2015. This laudable goal can however lead to less funding for higher education, which could endanger the long term economic prospects of developing countries.

*Local capacity for problem solving, good governance and socio-economic development*

The time that aid was seen as the solution to all problems in developing countries is over. It is clear that aid should focus on strengthening the local capacity to tackle problems and to improve good governance. In the long run this will lead to socio-economic development. Higher education is a crucial factor in this as it provides the necessary skilled manpower for economic growth and the critical mass of independently thinking people necessary to create open and democratic societies.

*Involvement of own institutes in development cooperation*

It is of national interest for Northern countries to involve their own institutes in development cooperation. It is important because their involvement contributes to the understanding of the complexity of issues of poverty and (under)development. It is also an instrument in maintaining and expanding the level of support for development cooperation in society. Above we have seen that Northern higher education institutes have their own motives to be involved in development cooperation and donors want to built on these.

*Maintenance of research base on development issues at home*

Poverty and global inequality are major geo-political issues and any country needs to maintain a critical mass of individual researchers and institutes who can inform decision makers and the general public about what is going on. There is also a commercial interest in having a good understanding of emerging economies: this can offer new opportunities for exports and imports (e.g. attracting international students).

## 3.2 *Do donors deliver what Southern partners need?*

The question whether donors deliver what is needed in the South has two aspects:

- Is aid targeting the right problems?
- Is the way in which aid is channelled conducive to reach the stated objectives?

We will deal with both questions, referring only to aid related to higher education.

The theme of the conference focused on the effectiveness of support mechanisms, so it is hardly surprising that the papers and discussions during the conference centred around the second question. Nevertheless, the first question was also addressed, albeit indirectly, in the contributions and discussions of the representatives of the Southern ministries and institutes. By listing the challenges which they are facing, they listed areas for possible aid support. Many of these challenges lie at the system level: quality assurance, access to the internet,

attracting private funds without compromising accessibility and equity, etc. Support to problems at the system level are usually incorporated in SWAps although they can also form part of bilateral cooperation programmes.

System level support through fellowship or institutional cooperation programmes is quite rare, but some of these programmes offer possibilities to solve problems at sector or systems level. Both the Swedish research cooperation programme and the Dutch NPT programme do venture in areas such as policy setting, quality assurance systems, and systems management. More common among fellowship and institutional cooperation programmes is the strengthening of specific capacities of individuals or institutes. There is little doubt that this support responds to real needs in the South. Whether the processes of identification of beneficiaries in the framework of the various programmes lead to the most effective results viewed from a sectoral or national perspective is another matter.

The question whether aid is delivered in the most appropriate way has been debated extensively in the papers and during the conference. Here we first discuss the problems in the present aid system, before we deal with the different proposals on how to improve it. The participants mentioned the following weaknesses in the present aid delivery system:

### *Aid is fragmented, uncoordinated and not harmonized*

Each donor and programme tends to come with its own priorities, procedures and approach. This leads to an overburdening of recipient countries and institutes who are already suffering from a lack of capacities in the field of planning, monitoring and reporting. The SWAp was designed to overcome the fragmentation and is now increasingly being applied.

Some form of coordination between SWAps in education, fellowship and institutional cooperation programmes would seem logical, but in practice this is hardly the case. The donors at the conference called for better coordination between donors and harmonisation of procedures. They did not, however, refer specifically to coordination between the different aid modalities that are used to support the higher education and research sector in the South. Nevertheless this seems a topic that deserves serious attention.

### *Funds are not enough*

The overall funding for higher education is far too low; both from domestic sources as well as from international aid. The result is a poor infrastructure, low salaries, etc. The participants supported the Commission for Africa in its demand for a dramatic increase in funding for higher education across the continent. The suggestions to use such additional funds for centres of excellence and for salary enhancement met with mixed reactions, basically as some doubt the sustainability of these ideas.

### *Programmes are often rigid in structure and implementation*

One consistent finding of evaluations is that projects are most successful when they fit organically in the development path of the recipient. This means that a lot of attention should be paid to the identification and formulation of projects and the fact that programmes should be able to design 'tailor made' solutions to specific needs or types of assistance that match with the existing capacities of the institute. Unfortunately few programmes offer such flexibility.

*Difficult to combine support mechanisms for greater impact*

It seems logical to combine fellowship programmes with institutional development programmes; the first could upgrade the staff, the second the curriculum, the quality control system or whatever other issue that was identified. Yet, fellowship programmes have their own systems of selecting candidates and these are not coordinated with the identification process of institutional cooperation programmes. Bearing in mind the focus of donors on impact measurement and the difficulties fellowship programmes have in living up to this, they could gain much more through better integration.

# 4   The state of affairs in the North

## 4.1  Motives to be involved in partnerships

Northern institutes have a very long tradition of cooperating with their counterparts in the South. For example, more then 50 years ago the Dutch universities joined forces for development cooperation by creating Nuffic. The reasons why Northern institutes are involved in international cooperation with developing countries are of a financial, academic or altruistic nature. A number of interests are served by their involvement in development cooperation with Southern institutes:

*Joint research*

Research is the core business of any university. Curiosity, scientific advancement and/or social engagement can be reasons for individual scientists to do research in the South. At the same time it is of national interest for any country to have a good insight in what is going on in the South. Problems of underdevelopment and global inequalities will stay high on the geo-political agenda and no country can allow itself to have to rely on second-hand information on these issues.

*Exchange of staff and students*

In an increasingly global world, Northern institutes have to offer their students the opportunity to get international experience during their studies. Getting students from the South offers Northern institutes access to their brains and talents. With falling numbers of students (especially in science) at home, attracting bright international students and researchers is a must for Northern institutes. Clearly here the interests of Southern and Northern higher education institutes diverge.

*International profile*

Strengthening the institute's profile and position in the international higher education and research arena. In a world where globalisation is the catchword of the day, higher education institutes have to compete at international level. With an ever-increasing mobility of students, each institute has to built up an international reputation to attract more paying students in the future. Therefore Northern institutes are especially interested in cooperation with institutes in emerging economies.

*Economic gains*

Northern and Southern institutes can both profit from any form of cooperation. Via economies of scale they can purchase and use internet based software at a much reduced price. The setting up of joint courses with partners in the South attracts new students and lowers the costs. Other opportunities lie in the establishment of branch campuses in the South and the provision of distance learning courses via international networks of institutes.

*Social engagement*

Researchers, higher education institutes and government see it as their moral duty to use all possible means to fight poverty and inequality, nationally and globally. Research is one of these means and many Northern academics and their institutes are genuinely interested in contributing to the global war on poverty.

## 4.2   Factors which influence Northern enthusiasm for development cooperation

It seems that Northern institutes of higher education are well suited to provide support to their Southern counterparts. Yet, in the setting in which they have to operate at present, they have fewer and fewer of their own resources available to do so. Core funding for research has been reduced over the last decade, available funds per student are under pressure and the culture of accountability means that much energy has to be devoted to management issues. Universities have to rely increasingly on external funding, both for research programmes and for cooperation programmes.

Secondly, output financing is used in a growing number of countries: institutes get a fixed amount per graduate they produce. This might stimulate Northern institutes to cooperate with Southern partners at undergraduate level, but at the same time it puts a high premium on having the final degree awarded by the Northern institute. This may deter Northern institutes from setting up joint degrees with Southern partners.

Thirdly, higher education institutes operate in a culture of 'publish or perish'. Research in the South is often more complex and more time consuming and to get the results published in internationally refereed journals is very difficult. As Northern institutes are under growing pressure to focus their resources on a limited number of priorities, research topics relevant to the South are losing out.

When donors cover the costs of cooperation and/or research programmes with Southern partners as part of an aid programme, this can lead to difficulties as they want, in return for their money, to influence the content of the cooperation programmes. This means Northern higher education institutes and donors can have different objectives with cooperation programmes and they can also have different opinions about how to manage these.

Northern higher education institutes made clear at the conference that when they are involved in aid programmes they prefer:

*Co-ownership of programmes and projects*

Based on the motives mentioned before Northern higher education institutes like to co-own the project: they want to be involved in the selection of the partners, in formulating the objectives of the project and in the management and administration of it.

*Co-financing arrangements*

Northern higher education institutes like to work with co-financing arrangements: ideally the donor contribution should supplement the contribution of the institute itself. This gives the institute the feeling of (co-)ownership and this is highly motivating for the staff. Normally it also ensures a greater level of commitment and continuity in the programmes.

*Partnership approach*

Partnerships and networks are the preferred form of cooperation for Northern universities. They seek institutionalised, multilateral, long-term relationships that should be based on shared objectives, mutual benefits, equality in responsibilities, sound business agreements and sustainable funding. Benefits may be uneven, but that should not be a problem when partners acknowledge this and are satisfied with what they get out of the deal.

# 5  Recommendations and challenges

At the conference a number of recommendations were formulated by the participants of the Expert Meeting; these were then validated in discussions with the larger group of participants in the last session on Wednesday, 25 May. These discussions lead to a number of final recommendations as well as to a number of challenges. The latter refers to issues of design and implementation of higher education support programmes.

## 5.1  Recommendations

In the proceedings one can read the recommendations as formulated by the participants of the conference. Here these recommendations are presented under the same headings, but with slightly different wording as some recommendations were formulated in a kind of shorthand that is only understandable for participants of the conference. In most cases, some additional explanation is also given, based on recommendations formulated in earlier stages of the conference.

*Quality assurance mechanisms and systems at institutional, national and international levels.*

The participants recommended that any cooperation or funding relationship should include quality assurance mechanisms as a fully integrated component. At institutional level these mechanisms refer mainly to the enhancement of the quality of teaching and research of the institute concerned; at national level, mainly to the regulation of national priorities; and at the international level, mainly to the recognition of (joint) degrees.

According to the participants it should be a responsibility of the state to establish a threshold with minimum conditions which all programmes and institutes should comply with. Regulatory authorities should implement the quality assurance regulations. They should have the capacity to make independent decisions but at the same time, they should not impinge on, or reduce, the institutional autonomy of higher education institutes.

*Partnerships and networking*

Partnerships and networks are much appreciated and effective modes of cooperation in programmes which aim to strengthen institutional capacities in the South. Although the overall aim should be to serve the capacity needs of the institute in the South, it is clear that effective partnerships are based on a common understanding of and respect for mutual

interests on both sides. In order to create sustainable partnerships, there should be opportunities to develop such arrangements with a long term commitment. A process approach should be adopted. Innovative long-term financing should be part of the commitment.

Apart from the benefits which stem from partnerships with Northern institutes, Southern institutes can learn much from each other. Donors should stronger encourage South – South cooperation. One option could be to open up fellowship programmes more to training in the region.

An important factor for successful partnerships is not mere strength, but potential for growth and strong leadership. Partnerships should be dynamic and not be limited to two or more higher education institutes, but involving partners from sector and society as well. Partnerships with these characteristics are better placed to contribute to sustainable development and to achieving the MDGs.

Better use should be made of new ICT application to create and expand global networks where members from North and South work together on high quality teaching and research. These *part-netships* should be based on mutual benefits, equality in responsibilities, sound business agreements and sustainable funding.

*Centres of Excellence*

Generation of new knowledge and ideas is the engine for innovation and development, as well as personal growth. The essence of higher education is to expose young people both to a standard body of knowledge and to the process of knowledge generation. Knowledge by its very nature is international; therefore high quality higher education can only be achieved in an internationally well connected institute where research and education are combined. Centres of Excellence should be the places where high quality research and education is concentrated.

Building on existing initiatives to create Centres of Excellence supported by national governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies and private foundations, it was recommended that the Commission for Africa's proposals, especially with regard to university renewal and Centres of Excellence be fully supported. For this, political will in both developed and developing countries needs to be created to implement and sustain the Commission for Africa's recommendations. At the same time, the critical link between Centres of Excellence, capacity for high quality, relevant research and advanced training on the one hand and poverty reduction and the other MDGs on the other needs to be forged. Internationally competitive and enabling research and teaching environments have to be established as well to reverse brain drain and attract new professionals.

*Better donor coordination and increased level of funding*

Higher education is indispensable for poverty reduction and sustainable development for a number of reasons. It is important for strengthening governance and for building capacity to generate knowledge. It is the producer of calibre staff which is needed for all poverty reduction programmes. And, higher education and research provide an entrance to a vast international pool of knowledge. The importance of research for development is highlighted in the summary report of the UN Millennium Project (under the directorship of Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs) when it observes that "*any strategy to meet the Goals requires a special effort to build scientific and technological capacities in the poorest countries,*

*both to help drive economic development and to help forge solutions to development countries' own scientific challenges.*"[2]

However, higher education and research is severely under-funded and additional finance is needed, both from national budgets as well as from the donor community.

Higher education in the South needs external support, but donors and their programmes should not impede the own development path of national higher education systems. The Paris Declaration (March 2005) provides a good framework for better coordination among donors and with stakeholders in the South. It focuses on (Southern) ownership, alignment with national structures, joint funding and harmonization of activities.

In order to achieve better coordination and harmonization, the stakeholder group of donors also recommended the establishment of a mechanism (preferably in the form of a small, independent institute or coordinating body) in which donor agencies and Southern stakeholders participate. It could act as a clearing house (setting rules, checking policies, etc.), and it could be tasked to generate and dispersing funds for higher education and research for development. Other functions might be advocacy of higher education and research for development and linking higher education and research to national and regional development goals.

### Flexible programmes

The group of Northern programme administrators expressed the wish to have flexible programmes, meaning that different types of aid mechanisms within and between programmes should be possible. In this way the organic fit between what an institute needs and what donors can offer in terms of support comes within reach. The Northern academics and Dutch practitioners called the attention to another aspect of flexibility, referring to the blessing of decreasing levels of bureaucratic control while maintaining transparency in programme management and implementation.

Fellowship programmes and institutional programmes can gain much by a better integration. The final recommendation of the participants was to integrate fellowships in institutional development resulting in one programme with different modalities (*à la carte*) in order to address the needs of governments, institutes, and individuals within higher education development in the South. The multi-annual agreements of the Dutch NFP fellowship programmes provide an interesting example: they focus on upgrading the skills of staff of an organisation, based on its overall human development strategy.

## 5.2 Challenges

Translating the recommendations into practice is a huge task. To make support programmes to higher education and research more effective requires all stakeholders to do their part of the homework, a lot of which still needs to be done. This homework is formulated here in terms of challenges.

*Making the link between support to higher education and research and poverty reduction more explicit.*

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[2] UN Millennium Project (2005), *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals.*

Higher education is not part of the MDGs that dominate the development discourse at the moment. In order to get the attention it deserves, the contribution of higher education to poverty reduction has to be made more explicit. This can be done by explaining the impact of higher education on intermediate goals that are generally believed to promote pro-poor growth: good governance, capacity building, manpower development, innovations and economic growth.

On the other hand, the link between support to higher education and research and poverty reduction can be strengthened by better coordination between various aid modalities and strengthening the link between specific higher education programmes and SWAp on education and other sectors. In this scenario, the identification and implementation processes of the various programmes need to be streamlined and well orchestrated.

### Creating a balance between quality and quantity

The Commission for Africa lists the development of new Centres of Excellence as a key part of its recommended strategy for higher education in Africa. Some funding agencies focus their support to African higher education on a small group of universities. Although such focused support might have a catalytic impact on the system as a whole, it does not raise the level of higher education as a whole. If support to Centres of Excellence is not accompanied by substantial increases in overall funding of higher education and research, it may put the national systems in a difficult position. Investments in Centres of Excellence should not happen at the expense of access and quality at other institutes.

### Demonstrating the impact of support to higher education and research

Evaluations and reviews of institutional cooperation programmes and fellowship programmes reveal that there is hardly any hard evidence of the impact of these programmes. Many programmes, especially fellowship programmes, lack clearly defined objectives and verifiable indicators for measuring success. Despite positive accounts of alumni and employers about the effects of training for individuals and organisations, there is little formal evidence of the impact of training programmes on poverty alleviation, improvements in sectors, economy or society. Institutional programmes are doing better in this sense, but still a lot of ground has to be covered. The first step could be to formulate clear-cut objectives for institutional cooperation projects and training activities that focus directly on the relation between the supported institute and its environment (e.g. the world of work).

### Resolving ownership issues at programme and project level.

The ownership of programmes and projects needs clarification. In programmes, the ownership is vested in the party or parties which provide the funds. Joint-financing programmes have shared ownership and serve multiple purposes. This makes a proper balancing of interests and responsibilities for programme management and implementation problematic. Southern ownership of programmes is difficult to achieve as long as donors dictate the conditions and modalities for their support. In SWAps the ownership of the South is substantial, but not complete. The participating donors do influence the content and implementation of the programme. The question may be raised whether full ownership in the South ('the proverbial bag of money without strings attached') – if it were possible – would be a preferred arrangement by the organisations in the South. Donor conditions, modalities and influence may be a nuisance, but also has positive sides to it, as has been mentioned in a number of contributions to the conference. It may provide a positive

stimulus for action, reaction and change. Sometimes it can also serve as an excuse for unpopular policies or as a way to avoid political conflicts.

In projects, the ideal is that the needs in the South are the starting point for any cooperation and that a Southern organisation owns the project; it formulates the objectives and is responsible for the management and organisation. In practice the Northern partner has its own priorities as well, and so does the donor. On top of that we have to deal with the perspectives and interests of ministries, NGOs, students, embassies and a wide range of others. These are all legitimate stakeholders and their ideas have to be taken into consideration; yet simply adding up all priorities and mixing them into a project is not an option. The result would be that nobody owns the project, and that it will have unrealistic objectives and an unworkable approach.

The above makes clear that ownership of programmes and projects in the South is a concept with strong ideological connotations which in practice cannot be achieved, only approximated. Co-ownership is the rule rather than the exception. The challenge in any programme or project is to clearly define the co-ownership relations and responsibilities of the stakeholders/partners with the aim of optimising the effects of the arrangement.

*Forging a shared vision on internationalisation, development cooperation and knowledge production.*

The participation of Northern institutes in development cooperation is under pressure due to factors like increased competition, commoditisation of education and the 'publish or perish' culture. Northern institutes are, however, essential partners in the process of strengthening higher education and research in developing countries. Their involvement however can only be maintained and strengthened if the institutes, the development cooperation agencies, research councils and the ministries of education underwrite the importance of the role of Northern institutes in capacity building and development research in and for developing countries. With the shared vision comes a shared commitment, including the finances which are needed to enable the institutes to play their role. In a number of countries the objectives which steer internationalisation, development cooperation and knowledge production activities are converging to the extent that Northern universities are expected to take on a global task and contribute to capacity building in developing countries. This is a positive development which should be further pursued.

# 6   Concluding remarks

The papers and other contributions make perfectly clear that the importance of higher education and research for national development is widely acknowledged and back on the development agenda. It is undisputed that developing countries need higher education and research capacity to be able to solve the problems which they are facing, to connect to developments in the rest of the world and to give direction to their own development.

Governments and donors seem to agree that educational development should take place using a holistic approach. The education system should be developed in a well balanced and coordinated way, in a way that the development in one layer (primary, secondary or post-secondary) can benefit from, as well as contribute to the development of the other components of the system. Needless to say that this requires strong coordination between the policies and actions of national governments and development partners, and among the development partners themselves.

The conference underscored the importance of networking and collaboration between institutes as an effective way of building capacity and producing knowledge. Not only between Southern institutes and their Northern counterparts, but also between Southern institutes. They can learn valuable lessons from shared experiences and in doing so, strengthen each other's capacities.

The call for quality assurance and maintenance at all levels of the education and research system is an important issue and a real challenge which can only be realized with commitment, sufficient resources and effective regulatory bodies and systems at institutional, national and international levels.

More funds need to be spent on higher education and research. Efficiency gains need to be made as well, by making more effective use of the means and channels which are already available. In this context, the conference called for greater flexibility in the use of existing programmes and for the complementary use of these programmes, even among donors.

The recommendations of the conference provide an agenda for further action which can be expected to result in more effective higher education and research in developing countries, as well as more support for this. At the same time, it is good to be aware of challenges which lie ahead so that actions can be planned and executed on a realistic footing.