

**TOWARDS A
SUSTAINABLE AFRICAN
HIGHER EDUCATION
EXPERTISE NETWORK**

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Report from meeting in Accra attended by:

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Background

A number of changes currently taking place in universities and colleges worldwide find their origin in the belief that societies are rapidly becoming knowledge societies, as is argued convincingly by scholars such as Manuel Castells. The key assumption underlying this belief is that economic productivity and wealth will be increasingly dependent on the production and application of new knowledge by highly trained knowledge workers. It is a nation's capability to apply new knowledge to existing knowledge, rather than physical capital, natural resources or traditional labour skills that is essential for economic development.

While it is true that higher education has always been formally designed as a structure for the production, transfer and dissemination of advanced knowledge, the emergence of a knowledge-based society and economy has placed new pressures on it. The need for a flexible and versatile workforce, one that is constantly learning and upgrading its skills, has led to a continual demand for courses in which employees are re-trained and updated on a lifelong basis. Students now have to be prepared for a labour market in which they can be expected to change jobs many times, and they need to acquire appropriate skills that are transferable and portable across sectors, countries and cultures.

In addition, the traditional method of knowledge production is gradually being complemented by a mode in which research problems are identified and addressed in the context of application. This means that problems are not mainly tackled from a mono-disciplinary academic perspective, nor formulated based upon individual curiosity alone, but rather from various perspectives by a wider set of actors. This new mode of research requires a trans-disciplinary approach characterized by interaction among end users, producers and brokers of knowledge. Also, it increasingly involves educational institutions and enterprises that are global in scope. As a result, many aspects of traditional higher education institutions have to be adapted and modified.

Development of the knowledge-based society and economy has resulted in a number of trends in higher education that, while having been experienced differently in developed and underdeveloped countries, are nevertheless readily identifiable. However, the knowledge, expertise and skills needed for analysing these trends are unequally distributed. While in North America, Europe and Australia over the last 30 to 40 years a large number of graduate programmes and research centers on higher education have been established, forming the foundation for the gradual development in that period of the new field of higher education studies, in other parts of the world, the academic interest in higher education has been practically absent or very fragmented. This is also the case in Sub-Saharan Africa. While in most African countries there is no tradition and subsequently no structure for studying higher education.

The main exception, South Africa, is characterised by a fragmentation of the research practice in this field, i.e. there are many small units where research on and teaching in higher education is done, and these units are very loosely coupled, if at all.

The trends in the funding and organisation of the field of higher education research in the mature systems follow the general trend, i.e. there is a growing tendency to organize the research activities of the field through networks. These networks do not only consist of senior academic researchers based in established research centers, but also of graduate students and practitioners. Recently the European Union has, for example, launched its 6th Research Framework Programme with a budget of €17 billion, and the majority of the research funds will be invested in research networks. In addition, the EU has started a number of initiatives to strengthen the European higher education and research arena on the basis of the assumption that only a strengthened European higher education and research system will allow Europe to make the shift towards the knowledge society effectively.

With regards to leadership and management development, a study commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat (1996) reported that everywhere in the developing world higher education institutions confront deteriorating conditions caused by rapid expansion and diminishing resources to support them. The literature refers consistently to 'decline in the quality of teaching and learning, overcrowding of lecture rooms, inadequate staffing, deteriorating physical facilities, poor library resources, insufficient scientific equipment, poor quality of staff at all levels, lack of properly conducted research, low staff morale, inadequate salary and other rewards for staff, graduate unemployment, mismatch between educational output and labour market needs'. It is widely recognised that a quantum increase is needed in the improvement of the quality of higher education in developing countries, and that 'the human resource factor' is the key to this.

The African Regional consultation (April 1-4, Dakar) preparatory to the 1998 World Summit on Higher Education identified leadership and management capacity building as one of four key concerns. The communiqué stated that:

- Promoting and facilitating the development of management capacity and a culture of leadership in higher education is an urgent requirement of human resource development in higher education
- There is a need to influence senior management in higher education concerning the importance of leadership and management development
- To develop leadership and management capacity, it is essential that there is collaboration with national representative organisations, and with regional higher education consortia, providing a forum for clarifying processes and concepts related to higher education leadership and management
- There is a need for specialist advice and information on leadership and management development and
- There should be a concerted effort to raise funds and mobilise resources for leadership and management development.

Despite the existence of the AAU SUMA programme, and SAUVCA's leadership programmes, the area of leadership and management capacity building is, like HE studies, fragmented and under capacitated, with an increasing vulnerability to unscrupulous management training providers, particularly from abroad.

The current situation in Africa does not allow for a linear, straightforward development of an expertise network because the basis is lacking, i.e. an established field of higher education studies firmly rooted in a number of higher education research centers that have a long tradition of cross-national cooperation. Therefore a new initiative is necessary for the establishment of an expertise structure on higher education in Africa.

From the above described context it can be argued that what is needed is a focused effort to develop an African cooperation structure on higher education that would allow for relevant training programmes and research activities through effective national and international networking. Further such a structure should stimulate the link between higher education studies and the practice of higher education in Africa and in Europe and the USA. Finally, such a structure could become the catalyst for the development of an African expertise network in higher education.

The network/s would be expected to deal with:

- Knowledge production - research that is more analytic and programmatic
- Knowledge dissemination - knowledge in the academic domain (publishing), policy and consultancy
- Knowledge reproduction - Masters and Doctoral programmes and management and leadership capacity building through focused training programmes.

Two Converging Initiatives

During the latter part of 2002, two separate but not unconnected discussions started about problems associated with leadership and management training and how to strengthen HE as a field of study. Carnegie Corporation supported the development of a framework for leadership and management training and asked the UWC EPU, Chet and AAU to develop a planning proposal. A draft-planning grant was developed, discussed, revised and submitted around September 2003. However, it was felt that broader consultation was required and on 6/7 November a meeting was convened in Accra, sponsored by Ford Foundation. The 'concept model' outlined below emerged from this meeting, attended by

Over a similar period as the leadership and management capacity building discussions, a collaboration started between Chet and HEDDA about building expertise in the field of higher education studies. A draft concept paper was submitted to Ford Foundation and the Norwegian Ministry of Education. Partial funding was obtained from the latter to sponsor a meeting around GATTS and networks in higher education studies. These discussions resulted

in a meeting in Cape Town on 1 and 2 November, attended by 22 participants. (other African countries 4, Europe 5, South Africa 13). (see attached participants list)

What follows is a report from the Accra meeting on Leadership Development and Management Training (LDMT), interspersed with relevant comments from the Cape Town meeting on HE studies (HES).

Higher Education Studies and Leadership Development and Management Training

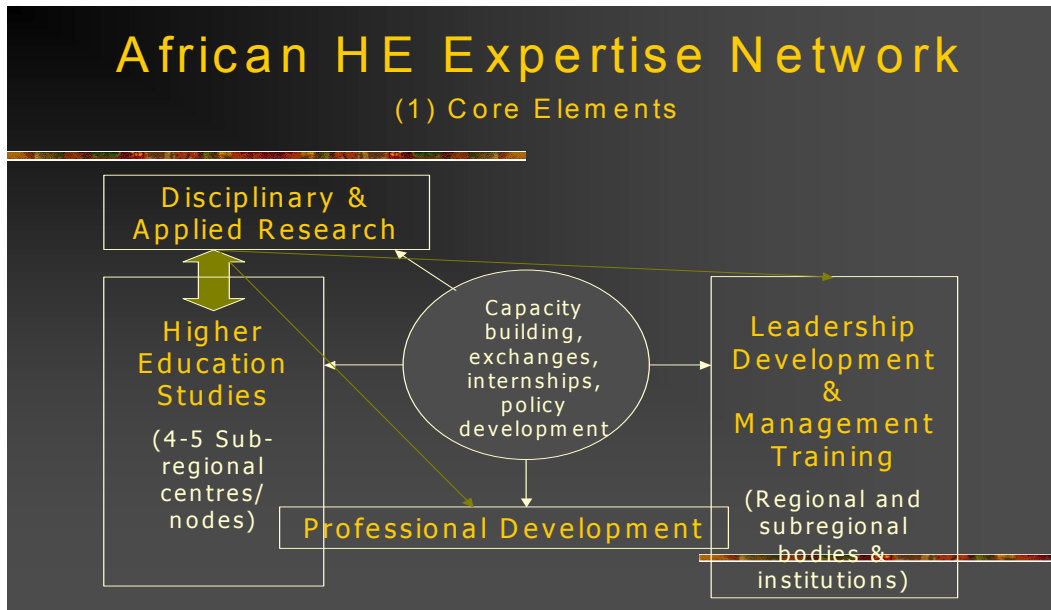
Differentiation and connection

A major inherited problem, brought about often by a lack of capacity, is that a range of functions had been collapsed, such as leadership capacity building and teaching, skills and awareness training, etc. Consensus emerged in both groups that some of these key functions had to be separated, but linked, and that a key method of linking is networks.

Slide 1 below illustrates the core elements of the proposed network. It shows that there are two main strands to the Expertise network; Higher Education Studies (HES) (research and postgraduate teaching) and Leadership Development and Management Training (LDMT). These two strands have distinctly different purposes, qualifications, content, modes of delivery and providers.

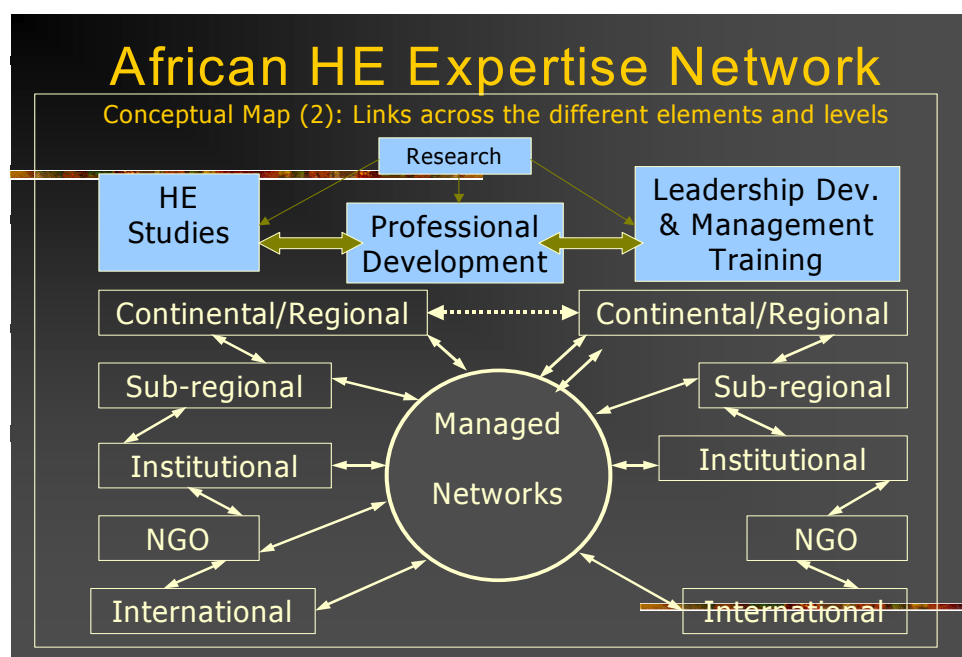
The distinction is essentially between people whose primary aim is to build the field of knowledge in higher education through research and teaching, and those people who are already practicing in higher education at a senior level who want to improve their leadership and management skills. Professional development links these two strands because it applies to both strands, but there is also a distinct need to develop higher education specialities, particularly in the areas of student administration, information management and academic staff development. A key challenge will be to develop linkages through networks that will allow knowledge and experience from the two strands to inform each other, both in terms of capacity building and for policy development.

Slide 1



Slide 2 illustrates links across the different networks. The idea is that a network will operate at a continental (Unesco regional) level, with sub-regional nodes. Africa is understood to mean, “work on Africa” and should not be restricted to ‘those in Africa”, provided that the emphasis will be on capacity development in African institutions and for trainers, teachers and researchers in Africa. While the intention is that each sub-region will have a node for both HES and LDMT, the proposed expertise map will identify what is currently “on the table” and that is where it will start. A key aspect is for both strands to link to already established international networks. A continent-wide organisation, such as AAU, would have additional functions in overall co-ordination, identifying needs and gaps, providing continent-wide programmes, etc.

Slide 2



Higher Education Studies

“Academic capacity” is understood to mean research capacity in HE, meaning the ability to undertake scientific inquiry or analysis on aspects of HE. More generally, to develop academic capacity means to develop a critical mass of expertise in teaching, learning and research in HES. The development of institutional capacity cannot be de-linked from and individual capacity; academic capacity thus includes the availability of human resources and physical resources.

Slides 3 and 4 below reflect the discussions on HES as a field of expertise.

Slide 3

Higher Education Studies

- **Qualification Type:**
 - Formal, accredited qualification, involving rigorous academic engagement in key elements of the new emerging field of HES
- **Focus (in African context):**
 - Provides (critical sociological) overview of HE trends and policy issues related to developing country context
- **Content/knowledge base**
 - Mainly curriculum-driven, with problem-based assignments and some experiential sharing
 - Informed by range of policy-related and other research undertaken in the field and in research networks
- **Function/purpose:**
 - Long-term capacity building
 - Contributes to short-term LD & MT by providing material which is adapted for the presentation of short overviews of key HE issues

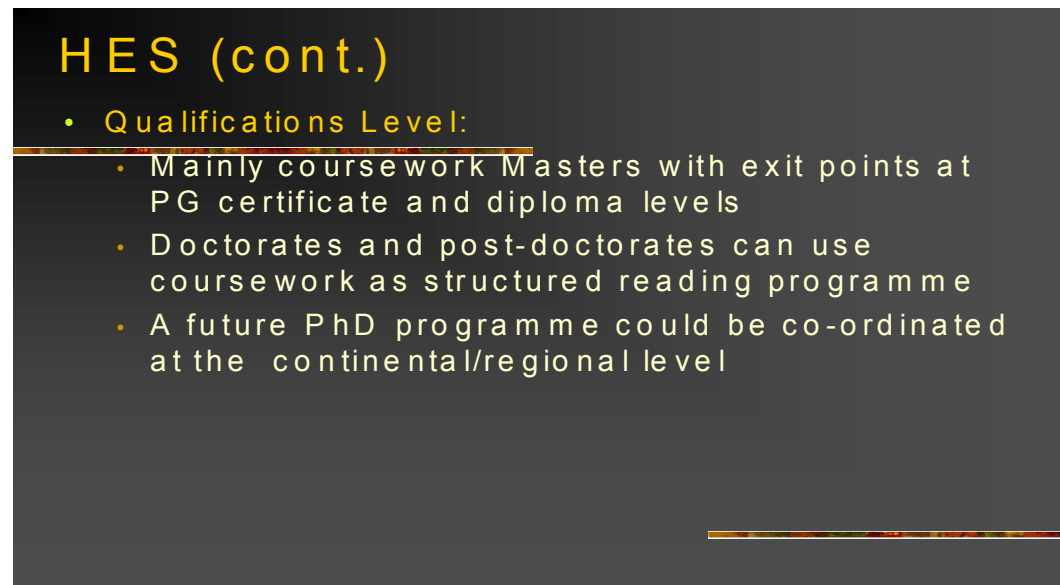
Slide 4

HES (cont)

- **Targets: 2 streams**
 - Researchers/academics in the emerging field
 - Institutional managers and other practitioners & policymakers requiring formal academic engagement in the field
- **Providers/Structures:**
 - HE Centres
- **Coverage/Levels**
 - Regional through 4-5 sub-regional centres
- **Delivery Mode:**
 - This will depend on regional circumstances, but is likely to comprise a mixed mode of 2-3 modularised short contact residential blocks per year to accommodate participants who are in employment, plus ITC-based support between blocks

Slide 5 shows that for HES, the qualification level is at the post graduate diploma and degree levels.

Slide 5



HES (cont.)

- **Qualifications Level:**
 - Mainly coursework Masters with exit points at PG certificate and diploma levels
 - Doctorates and post-doctorates can use coursework as structured reading programme
 - A future PhD programme could be co-ordinated at the continental/regional level

Research

A major problem with higher education research in Africa is that it is fragmented, partially through rapidly changing funding fads and partially due to the weakness of higher education as a field of study. In order to build knowledge through systematic programmes, continent-wide ‘thematic’ research networks, such as are proposed under Phase III of the AAU Study Programme, need to be established. The knowledge produced can be disseminated, amongst others, through the newly established journal, the teaching centers, LDMT capacity building and policy networks. For both LDMT and policy development, research may have to be made accessible by the relevant linking mechanism. The research themes need to be developed in interaction between researchers, practitioners and policymakers. At the Cape Town HES meeting the following were mentioned as examples of themes:

- Funding – the economics of HE
- Governance
- Curriculum studies
- Student issues – around teaching and learning
- History/philosophy of HE
- Globalisation/internationalisation of knowledge
- Quality Assurance

Leadership and Policy Development

While acknowledging many overlaps, a distinction has to be made between leadership and management training as function that require different approaches to capacity building. Leadership is understood to be at a range of levels, from the chair of Council to student leadership, but the focus being

senior institutional leadership. Leadership has specific attributes (Slide 7) and is diffused through all institutional and organisational levels (Slide 6). Management, by contrast, can be seen in terms of generic skills, and is 'domesticated', meaning those dealing with the particularity of higher education institutions (Slide 10). Leaders also require management skills, for which management training suited to their levels would be appropriate, while senior managers must display leadership qualities that could be inculcated in leadership development programmes. Despite these overlaps, the distinction between leadership and management is important and useful, as it has specific implications for targeting (who is to be "trained"), delivery methods (how), programme content (about what), providers (by whom).

Slide 6 illustrates these points.

Leadership Dev & Management Training

- **Leadership and management are distinct in key ways, but closely linked:**
 - Leaders must have range of management and policy development skills to provide leadership and take decisions
 - Leadership must be diffused through the organisation: Managers must exercise leadership within their domains

Leadership Development

Key issues for leadership are the strategic understanding of important developments in HE and change and crisis management (see slide 7).

Slide 7

Defining Leadership

- Vision and drive
- Strategic understanding of key HE developments such as:
 - Governance patterns - clarification of national and institutional roles
 - Shifts in competitive environment
 - Particular internal and external contexts
 - Changing student identities
 - Policy development
- **Crisis and change management**
 - Understanding the nature of HEIs as complex organisations
 - Understanding the nature of the policy process
 - Understanding and skills to manage change and facilitate innovation
 - Evaluation through performance criteria
 - Strategic use of information and MIS

Slides 8 and 9 below elaborate leadership development.

Slide 8

Leadership development

- **Qualification Type**
 - Short cycle, non-certificated
- **Target**
 - Leadership at all levels
- **Purpose/function/focus**
 - Enhanced skills, knowledge and awareness in key areas of HE and policy including topical and problem areas such as: GATS, HIV/AIDS, entrepreneurialism, systemic thinking
 - Development and strengthening of networks and communities of practice
- **Content/knowledge base**
 - Principally case study materials synthesised from practice and experience
 - Sharing of experience & problem solving
 - Additional content and insights from relevant research and analysis of latest trends

Slide 9

Leadership development (cont)

- **Delivery mode**
 - Short-cycle contact residential blocks, which could be supported by ongoing electronic information dissemination
 - Ideal participant numbers and duration: 30-40, 3-7 days
- **Delivery/providers**
 - Practitioners (current and past HE leaders and other CEOs) and specially trained facilitators
- **Coverage/levels/location**
 - Different activities are needed at all levels – regional, subregional, national (possibly) and institutional

Management Training

Management training deals with building capacity to deal with the specifics of making a higher education institution work and these can be acquired through customised programmes about managing within a HE environment and through specific on the job skills, such as student or staff information systems. Higher education institutions should also assist staff to improve their basic professional skills, such as accountancy, human resources management etc.

Slide 10

Management training

- **2 kinds may be distinguished:**
 - ~~Professional HE programmes~~, comprising formal customised qualifications provided by HE Centres.
 - Specific HE on-the-job management skills training, going beyond generic professional training and continuing professional development.
In addition, managers are trained through initial (generic) professional qualifications programmes (eg accountancy) as well as through ongoing professional development in these specialty areas
- **Focus:**
 - Immediate addressing of skills & knowledge gaps among current practitioners
 - Longer-term building of new capacity
- **Generic vs HE specific skills & knowledge:**
 - The field of management has certain generic elements
 - These are best applied to HE context by skillful 'mediators' who understand the context of both worlds

A range of providers should be explored, from customised business school programmes on issues such as strategic planning and change management, to in-house programmes designed for specific institutions. See Slide 11 below for more details on delivery and certification.

Slide 11

Management training (cont)

- **Providers/Structures:**
 - Regional and sub-regional bodies, national organisations, ~~management institutes and individual institutions~~
 - This will vary in different regions
 - Regional and sub-regional bodies responsible to oversee and co-ordinate the training of trainers, development of curricula templates, etc
- **Delivery Mode:**
 - Mainly driven by skills curriculum, with some experiential sharing
 - Modularised into recurrent short cycle provision plus possibility of IT-support between blocks
- **Certification**
 - Certification of attendance with possibility of certification at certificate and diploma levels to allow for credit accumulation at M level
 - The intention is to work towards a widely recognised and endorsed range of continent-wide qualifications

Networks

At the Cape Town meeting the generally accepted description of a network was groups of researchers from different countries who co-operate on a permanent basis without leaving their local spaces or institutions at which they are established. Networks were described as different to “partnerships”, “alliances”, and “consortiums” in that, while networks go beyond adhoc relationships, they are not rigid, bureaucratic relationships. Networks are seen as central to providing the basis for a critical mass around which people can do things.

It was apparent from the discussion that networks can serve different purposes and function differently. In fact it was argued, that the model of a network is dependent on the characteristics of its constituent audience and the field. In Europe, for example, networks have become instruments for consolidating expertise and resources and this is reflected in funding patterns of the European Union. The aim of most of these expertise networks is to ‘concentrate ‘ research and to close the gaps that exist between researchers and practitioners.

In terms of the functioning of networks, there was agreement that one could distinguish between *self-managed* networks and structured or *managed* networks. The former were seen as loose associations that become institutionalised through professional academic relationships that already exist, while the latter were seen as networks that require active co-ordination to ensure collaboration and communication between actors within the

network. With respect to both forms of networks, it was argued that for them to work, there needs to be shared experiences and a common history which must be related to a common good and public expectation in terms of the role of the network and the value it can add. In addition, everyone in the network must play the role they are best at and an already functioning infrastructure must be made to work for the sustainability of the network.

Lessons from existing networks/initiatives

Before articulating what the nature and form of an African expertise network in HE could be, a number of lessons/issues were drawn from descriptions of existing networks or initiatives in HE, in both Europe and Africa. Significant lessons/issues amongst these included the following:

- Not to lose sight of the need to attend to philosophical/political issues, like the purpose of the network, power relations, the complexity of the continent, transformation issues and setting research agendas
- To bear in mind the principle of mutuality – that everyone should feel they will gain from participating in the network
- To be conscious that there are three levels of operation of a network:
 - The production of basic knowledge of HE systems
 - Conducting inter-disciplinary research into HE sector that draws on disciplinary knowledge and,
 - At the level of applications – training of HE leadership and management and interaction with government to build systems
- To attend to issues of communication – for example, connecting researchers, enabling mobility of researchers and the use of the internet as a dialogue tool
- To ensure that a research network adds value to what is being done
- To be aware of differences between networks that bring together individuals and networks that bring together organisations and that it is necessary to institutionalise networks that bring together individuals in order for them to survive
- To delineate what we try to do with a network, for example, between leadership, management and research – decide whether we collapse functions or separate but connect functions
- To ensure that individuals can function effectively by being part of a strong organisation base and be part of a network
- To be aware that knowledge on HE is not all country/region specific – hence we should distinguish between knowledge of policy on HE and knowledge of practice in HE
- To ensure that expertise networks in HE are built around knowledge processes, not political processes.

Slides 12 and 13 to reflect the Accra discussion on networks.

Slide 12

Networking

Possible models of networking:

- One or more centres in specific fields create regional networks and build capacity in other centres
- Groups of individual scholars in specific fields meet around particular centre
- These are preferably linked to, and build on graduate programmes and research networks

New aspects of networking should be explored and experimented: eg joint supervision etc

Slide 13

Networking: Differentiation & Articulation

- Networks involve differentiated, but articulated functions among participating nodes and centres
- Differentiation and articulation are dynamic processes, with centres and nodes adapting their functions in response to changing environment and key developments.
- In a context of limited capacity, there is a danger of taking on too much and thus undermining core activities of centres
- Networks will necessarily be subregionally differentiated
- Part of creating and informing networks is the dynamic and ongoing mapping of existing regional and international expertise and experience. Mapping would have to be realistic in scope, and incremental.
- Networks must be carefully 'managed' to produce intended outcomes
- Different models must be investigated and experimented.

Mapping existing expertise with respect to African HE

Central to developing a networks, is the mapping of existing expertise in both HES and LDMT. Taking cognisance of previous failed attempts to map expertise, it was nevertheless felt that a carefully circumscribed professionally undertaken exercise would be crucial to determine 'what is already on the table' in terms of skills and it's concentration.

What should be mapped?

The following were considered to be the essential data that needed to be mapped:

- People and institutions doing research in HE
- Training and graduate programmes in HE studies
- Users of HE research outputs

- E.g. university planners, NGOs, statutory bodies, international agencies, other academics
- HE forums and networks that meet on the basis of funding and attempt to add value to the field
- Publications in HE studies

It was noted that professional associations are often useful to include in mapping exercises, but they do not currently exist in the HE field.

Scope of mapping exercise

Firstly, the mapping exercise should define HE studies as broadly as possible initially. This means that any research topic that influences HE practices or policies should be included. For example, S&T policy studies; knowledge studies; curriculum studies should be considered in so far as they relate to HE. This data can then be cleaned up and classified, where the classification can be based on publication categories, existing networks and structures or graduate programmes.

Secondly, the map has to set limits/parameters at the outset. For example, it could specify that it will include only publications after 1995 and will use as its criteria for inclusion “research on Africa” and not be limited to “research in Africa”. It was suggested that before mapping begins, there needs to be an assessment of what mapping exercises in HE have already been done, for example, data already captured in SA Knowledgebase and the survey on HE done by the Ford Foundation.

Output from mapping exercise

The mapping exercise should result in a dynamic data-base similar to the CV database that HEDDA manages. It should be ongoing and should serve as both an inventory of what exists and as a useful resource to donors. Self-editing should be used as a strategy to keep the data-base updated, which entails individuals taking responsibility for keeping their own data current. Finally, “Quality assurance” must be built into the data-base management/administration to ensure the quality of the data.

Funding

Key issues discussed centred around sustainability, the need for seed money, the strengthening of networks and exploring the range of alternative funding sources available.

Slide 14

Funding and sustainability

- The funding of HES and LMDT must be based on **‘diversified’ income sources** to ensure longterm sustainability
- To achieve this, funding will be needed for:
 - New and existing projects
 - Strengthening networks
 - Drawing in alternative sources
- Part of developing a final proposal will be investigating **independent and sustainable income sources**, including:
 - the potential of participants, and their institutions, governments and other national sources providing support (eg Skills levies, scholarships, HRD initiatives, etc)
 - Deploying the vast inherent resources in HE **entrepreneurially** to ensure sustainability

Summary of approach and possible roles of organisations

Informed by the analytical distinctions identified above, the approach to Leadership Development and Management Training – as part of the establishment of a wider African Network of Higher Education Expertise may be summarised as follows (Slide 15):

Slide 15

Summary of approach

- **HES, Professional Education, and LDMT are all necessary to build capacity and quality in African HE**
- **HES:**
 - Provided in 4-5 centres at sub-regional level (each with 1 or 2 specific areas of HE focus (economics, governance etc).
 - Linked strongly to research and capacity-building local, regional and international networks (including CODESRIA, JHEA) and M programmes, ensuring strong HES core
 - Together, these provide one knowledge base for LD & MT
 - Eventually, D programme at regional level
- **LD & MT:**
 - Provided at sub-regional, national, local/institutional levels
 - Preferable organisation and structural
 - Involves experiential knowledge base and training of facilitators and drawing in regional and international expertise
- **The identification of core modules is important, drawing from existing programmes**

Slide 17 begins to clarify the possible roles which the various regional and sub-regional organisations could play in operationalising the approach to Leadership Development and Management Training outlined above.

The AAU focuses on regional level co-ordination, providing a continental perspective and functioning as a clearinghouse for information as part of the mapping exercise. It can support the various networks. Importantly, it could, through its own contacts and networks, help to identify and support sub-regional bodies and institutions in West Africa, where there is a gap in this regard.

At the sub-regional level, the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) and South African Universities Vice-Chancellors' Association (SAUVCA) could build on their current activities to play important roles in a co-ordinated continent-wide initiative. They provide both sub-regional and national-level programmes and could help to extent and support existing and new networks.

Slide 17

Key roles

AAU

- Provides regional oversight
- Convenes regular meetings
- Functions as information clearinghouse for network mapping
- Supports networks and attracts international scholars
- Helps to identify sub-regional bodies and institutions in W Africa

IUCEA, SAUVCA

- Provide sub-regional and national LDMT programmes
- Supports and extends network

Next Steps

Ahmed Bawa got a signal from the funding partnership to start preparing a planning grant that would include a circumscribed mapping exercise of available expertise, investigate models of networks, investigate possible European funding contributions and start a process to develop the envisaged networks. Peter Maassen, Nico Cloete, George Subotzky and Ahmed Bawa will meet in late January to map out the framework of a planning grant.

Strategic next steps

- Given prevailing circumstances, in developing the expertise network, an incremental approach is necessary. This involves:
 - Identifying practical starting points, realistically based on where we are at the moment, which institutions and resources are immediately available
 - Later extending the network and scale of operations
 - Developing a proposal for raising funds

African Expertise Network
31 October 2003 – 2 November 2003

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