

Australia-Africa education research collaboration for development: meeting local and global needs

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Introduction

- Africa is growing and developing and it will continue to command a larger place on the global stage.
- Higher education is of critical importance to the long term development of knowledge societies
- HE institutions are vital for conducting research and researcher training, and therefore are important for knowledge generation and innovation to meet both local and global societal and economic needs.
- Much of Africa's effort in science and technology has been in Higher Education
- African HE institutions and policy makers must therefore ensure that the workforce acquires the skills to compete, innovate, and respond to complex social, environmental, and economical situations.
- There is need to strengthen HE collaboration between Africa and Australia, both as a response to global challenges and to contribute to African development.

Looking beyond Asia?

- Australia's attention shouldn't be just on what's happening in Asia, but also what's happening in the rest of the world, including Africa
- Until now, Australian HE institutions have focused on the emerging economies of Asia, with great success- Africa is still somewhat off the radar.
- Research collaboration is clearly a priority of mutual interest for both Africa and Australia in terms of generating innovative capacity for social and economic development.
- A stronger emphasis should be placed on developing research collaboration in its two-fold function
 1. as a contribution to knowledge generation and exchange, and
 2. as a capacity building measure to support institutional development.

Why collaborative research?

- A lone frog in a deep well has a superb view but of an extremely circumscribed patch of sky- hence the need to get out of the well.
- Research is a global endeavour which bridges different nations and often requires international collaboration.
- Urgent need for solutions related to global challenges
- Global issues cannot be tackled by one country alone, nor by a limited number of stakeholders or disciplines because of their magnitude
- Thus research collaboration settings is crucial in order to enhance the potential impact of research dedicated to tackling these challenges.

Specific benefits of collaborative research

- Co-authored research outputs
- Studies have shown that research outputs obtained from international collaborative research have a higher citation impact than those that are limited to one country or a single institution
- Done well, collaboration means less work for everyone without compromising on results.
- There are no better and more concrete networks than the networks that are built through collaborations.
- Increasing complexity of research technology and the explosion of measurable variables require multi-faceted approaches that can only be achieved in collaboration.

AAUN response

- AAUN has currently established joint Education research collaborations between Australian HE institutions and Institutions in Africa.
 1. Mapping Australia Africa Partnerships in Higher Education
 2. 21st Century skills for education practitioners: rapid elearning tools to develop interactive learning materials
 3. Master of Biosafety Joint Development Project
 4. Developing and retaining the next generation of academics and researchers
- Much more still needs to be done
- Australia- Africa HE research collaboration should be based on existing good practices
- Australian, African and other international funding bodies should build upon and expand such practice.

The way ahead

- The need for a dramatic increase in African investment in HE,
- Greater research spending
- Strong links between African HE institutions and African scholars in Australia and the diaspora in general
- Need for private sector in both Australia and Africa to expand its investments in HE research collaborations
- Governments- Support the Australia- Africa Strategic Research Partnerships as an important policy instrument
- Universities in Australia and Africa- Integrate research collaboration into the overall internationalisation strategy
- Development cooperation agencies- Explore possibilities of promoting joint research projects