Africa–Asia University Dialogue for Basic Education Development

A joint initiative of UNESCO, JICA, UNU and Hiroshima University

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Africa–Asia University Dialogue for Basic Education Development

- A project to promote an integrated perspective for educational development in sub-Saharan African countries with a particular focus on basic education development through dialogue and collaboration between universities in Africa and Asia.

- Background considerations:
  - EFA/MDG challenge for basic education development in sub-Saharan Africa
  - Limited contribution of the African universities to the development of the education sector; especially for support to policy research and planning
  - Ownership/partnership discourse => Combination of self-reliant development and ‘autonomy-respecting’ assistance/south–south cooperation
  - Global awakening of the need to revitalize the role of higher education => International attention on the crisis of African universities
Project outline

- **Over-all aim:** To promote a self-reliant approach to basic education development in Africa with an enhanced role for universities

- **Purpose:**
  1. To enable African universities to support the development of basic education in terms of policy research and planning;
  2. To help organize a research network of African universities for experience-sharing and joint capacitation, with a peer support from Asian universities

- **Duration:** 2005 – 2007

- **Participating universities:**
  - Africa – 17 universities from 12 countries
  - Asia – 13 universities from 6 countries

- **Supporting organizations:** UNESCO / JICA / UNU / Hiroshima University

- **Principal strategies:**
  1. Encouragement of national-level research and regional-level reflection
  2. Collaborative research by universities and national education authorities
  3. Exposure to Asian education development experiences
Who participate in the Africa–Asia University Dialogue?

- 17 universities from 12 sub-Saharan African countries
  - Year 1: Ghana / Kenya / Malawi / South Africa
  - Year 2: Ethiopia / Niger / Tanzania / Uganda
  - Year 3: Burkina Faso / Madagascar / Nigeria / Zambia

- 13 universities from 6 Asian countries
  - Japan / India / Indonesia / Thailand / Malaysia / Viet Nam

- Resource persons:
  - Dr. Juma Shabani (UNESCO/Harare Office)
  - Dr. N’Dri Assie-Lumumba (Cornell University)
  - Dr. Jonathan Jansen (University of Pretoria)
Why an Africa–Asia University Dialogue?

Three considerations:

1  Africa–Asia collaboration to generate a genuinely ‘Africa–owned’ project backed by an ‘autonomy–respecting’ assistance

2  Benefit of exposure to Asian education development experience and of interaction with Asian university–based experts

3  Utilizing the South–South Cooperation framework of the Tokyo International Conference on Africa Development (TICAD)
Principal project activities

- Study mission to Asia by African university-based education experts with their education ministry counterparts
  - Organized by JICA and directed by Hiroshima University CICE with the cooperation of UNU
  - Each year: 3-person team x 4 countries
    (1) 3-day visit to an Asian country for exposure and experience-sharing
    (2) 4-week stay in Japan to develop a national policy research scheme

- National-level policy research in participating African countries

- Regional reflective dialogue meeting at year’s end
  - Joint analysis of research results with the participation of Asian experts
  - Year 1: Hiroshima University, Higashi-Hiroshima Japan (Nov. 2005)
    Year 2: Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda (Nov. 2006)
    Year 3: UNESCO, Paris (Dec. 2007)
Anticipated outcome

- Research reports will be produced by national research teams on key policy issues in basic education development in selected African countries;

- African education researchers and national education ministry officials participating in the Project will enhance their skills and knowledge in basic education through planning and conduct of relevant policy research; and

- A space will be created for African education experts to dialogue among themselves and with Asian experts on the fundamental issues in basic education development and to explore more self-reliant and integrated approaches to the development of education sector in their countries.
Accomplishments so far

(i) Beginning of an Africa–Asia university network for policy research on basic education development

(ii) Elaboration of an ‘African’ policy research agenda for basic education development

(iii) Development of the experience-sharing model of technical cooperation for promoting a self-reliant development of the education sector in developing countries – promoted through ‘autonomy–respecting’ assistance
Difficulties encountered

- Difficulties encountered because of ‘non-conventional’ nature of the Project
  - Administrative complications working with multiple donors and in multiple locations
  - Distances (geographical, economic, cultural, linguistic)

- ‘Structural’ difficulties
  - Problem of communication between university and ministry

- ‘Cultural’ difficulties
  - Making sense of a ‘self-reliant’ approach to developing countries and ‘autonomy-respecting’ assistance to donors
The way forward

- Third and final Reflective Dialogue Meeting
  - Dates: 10 – 12 December, 2007
  - Venue: UNESCO, Paris

1. Presentation of the results of the national-level research

2. Examination of the possibilities for a second phase