

**Africa–Asia University Dialogue
for
Basic Education Development**

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

Masafumi Nagao

**Center for the Study of International Cooperation
in Education (CICE), Hiroshima University**

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:**
 - (i) Encouragement of national-level research and regional-level reflection
 - (ii) Collaborative research by universities and national education authorities
 - (iii) 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**