

# **The Role of Universities in Promoting Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals**

## **A African Universities Need to First Put their Houses in Order**

- a) Lack of vision/policy direction as emphasis tends to be basic education
- b) Lack of political will/mistrust between governments and universities
- c) Limited financial resources (from government and student fees)
- d) Poor management capacity
- e) Brain drain (universities abroad, international organisations)
- f) A substantial number of African universities are collapsing

## **B What African Universities can Do Under the Circumstances**

### **B1 Cross-Cutting Themes**

- a) Universities to tailor their programmes to national development
- b) Universities should evaluate/include realistic MDG targets in their strategic plans
- c) Policy development/exploiting university expertise
- d) Research and development
- e) Bridging the gap between knowledge producers and practitioners/policy makers
- f) Outreach/civic education
- g) Curriculum design for all levels of the system
- h) Spear heading good governance/enlightened leadership
- i) Strengthen ties with professional bodies

### **B2 Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger**

- a) Promotion of social mobility through:
  - Support for lower levels of education to enlarge training opportunities
  - Affirmative action to facilitate entry of disadvantaged groups into the more competitive areas of study
  - Affirmative action to support retention of disadvantaged groups in higher education institutions
  - Continuing education/alternative delivery programmes for working persons (distance education, weekend study, short-courses, etc).
- b) Promoting economic growth through:
  - Increased labour productivity
  - Expanding choices of study (ICT, etc)
  - Improving relevance of skills' taught
- c) Improved governance/Accountability

### **B3 Achievement of Universal Primary Education**

- a) Challenging conventional delivery systems and beliefs
- b) Curriculum design/modification
- c) Development of reading materials
- d) Review of inspection and advisory services
- e) Designing systems that promote improved use of available resources/sustainability
- f) Designing systems that address needs of minorities
- g) Improving testing systems
- h) Pre and in-service teacher training
- i) Training of school management teams
- j) Advocacy/dissemination of good ideas and practices
- k) Using university students for teaching, research, health support, outreach, etc.
- l) Strengthening programmes which promote teaching of local languages, cultures and local expert knowledge

### **B4 Promoting Gender Equity/Women Empowerment**

- a) Affirmative action related to entry/retention (bonus points, bursaries, maternity programmes)
- b) Promoting women's involvement in institutional governance (administration)
- c) Support female quality improvement programmes at the primary and secondary levels
- d) Start/strengthen gender focussed research/teaching programmes
- e) Introduce flexible modes of instruction (part-time, short courses, credit transfers)
- f) Recruit and promote female faculty

### **B5 Health Promotion (Reduce Child Mortality; Improve Maternal Health; Combat HIV/Aids, Malaria and Other Diseases)**

- a) Mounting/strengthening outreach/public health campaigns
- b) Investing in research programmes targeting specific epidemics (HIV/Aids, malaria, etc)
- c) Start/strengthen Aids Control Units in university/activities to trickle down
- d) Exploring the potential of local medical solutions/collaboration with indigenous practitioners.
- e) Identifying through research appropriate/affordable curative and preventive health care.

### **B6 Enhancing Environmental Sustainability**

- a) Involving academics/researchers on all commissions and authorities dealing with environmental issues as consultants for expert opinion
- b) Involving academics in awareness creation especially at the community level given the high calling placed on them at those levels as opinion leaders, mentors and role models.

- c) Facilitating development of relevant literature in environmental sustainability to suit all relevant groups.
- d) Strategic training and upgrading of knowledge for all categories of environmental officers.

### **B7 Promoting Global Partnerships for Development**

- a) Inter-university (teaching and research) between the North and South
- b) The virtual university/promotion of IT based on institutional strengths
- c) Supporting regional level graduate programmes
- d) Coordinating overseas training to reflect major human resource needs
- e) Support academics to participate in international and regional meetings to benefit from emerging knowledge
- f) Promoting/exporting students to e-trade
- g) Promoting student/youth exchange/tours for international exposure
- h) Spearheading research on innovations that could be exploited for commercially
- i) Equip students with skills that enhance self-reliance/entrepreneurial skills

### **C Way Forward: Improving the Capacity of African Universities To Deliver**

- a) Dialogues involving all stakeholders on what universities can do/how they should do it in partnership with relevant groups/organisations.
- b) Expand the financial base for improved infrastructure and other learning inputs.
- c) Curriculum design/monitoring of programmes to reflect changing needs
- d) Mounting effective systems of selecting students
- e) Recruitment, promotion, retention of the best academics
- f) Strengthening post-graduate training.
- g) Staff development (academic and administrative)
- h) Investment in research (by governments, the private sector, external partners)
- i) Investment in lower levels of the education system
- j) Coordinating higher education development to address national goals
- k) Exploring mechanisms for involving relevant non-academics in teaching and research programmes

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