REBUILDING HIGHER EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE: Implications for Regional Collaboration
REBUILDING HIGHER EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE: Implications for Regional Collaboration

Series Editor: Piyushi Kotecha
The single strongest uniting and motivating force that has consistently driven SARUA’s agenda, from its earliest days, to the present day and beyond, is the desire of the leaders of public universities across the SADC to strengthen and to capacitate higher education systems nationally and regionally, such that their universities can play a meaningful and recognised role in the future development of the region.

Such a vision occasionally needs to be tempered with reality. Much of the ground-breaking research conducted by SARUA in 2007 through 2009, has revealed the daunting nature of the challenges faced by many public universities in the region to simply survive and to maintain existing standards, never mind massively increasing student access and the volume and quality of research outputs, which their governments and people rightly expect. Perhaps, top of the challenges that such universities in ‘survival mode’ face are the very real problems of brain drain; inadequate infrastructure; the rapid ageing and decay of many existing facilities and, in some cases, the lack of access to some of even the most basic tools needed to conduct high-level teaching and learning in this; the age of the ‘Knowledge Society’.

SARUA was therefore aware of many of the problems, and indeed sympathetic to the issues raised by the Zimbabwe Universities Vice Chancellors Association (ZUVCA), when they wrote to the Executive Committee, towards the end of 2009, requesting the Association’s support in their endeavours to rebuild the higher education sector in their country.

The Executive needed, however, first to be clear as to the extent of SARUA’s potential involvement and the role it could usefully play. As a regional association SARUA must always prioritise the broad regional issues that affect the plurality of its members; and be firmly committed to the principle of respecting the independence and autonomy of both the individual institutions and the nation states within which they operate.

With respect to the considerable difficulties that universities in Zimbabwe have faced in recent years, SARUA recognises that there are numerous factors at work here which are unique to this particular context, and that the ultimate resolution of the difficulties facing higher education in Zimbabwe lies primarily between the Zimbabwean universities themselves and their government. However, as highlighted earlier, although the combined problems faced by Zimbabwean institutions may be an extreme case, they are certainly neither unique nor a completely isolated case. Many of SARUA’s member universities face similar ‘survival’ problems to a greater or to a lesser degree. The request from ZUVCA in fact represented a unique learning opportunity for SARUA’s members to collectively consider the reality of attempting to not only remain committed to the core mission of universities under severe resource, but also to other environmental constraints, and to demonstrate collective solidarity in such circumstances.

SARUA’s Executive Committee therefore committed to holding a VC dialogue discussion, in Cape Town in April 2010, which would be focused specifically on the theme of ‘Rebuilding Higher Education in Zimbabwe’. In preparation for the event, and to provide some broad facts and figures to support the discussions, a rapid needs analysis was conducted of the nine public universities in Zimbabwe. It is gratifying to record that all nine universities submitted inputs to this, and all nine were represented at the event itself, highlighting the unity of purpose by the Zimbabwean universities on this issue. Perhaps even more gratifying was the response of other universities in the region, particularly the number of
South African universities, who participated in the discussions and expressed their solidarity of purpose in the ‘Cape Town Accord’, published at the conclusion of the meeting.

A longer-term process has been initiated to explore the issues raised in greater detail, and to work in close co-operation with the universities in Zimbabwe with the knowledge and acceptance of the authorities within the country. It is hoped that this will raise awareness and generate some concrete outcomes towards genuinely contributing to sustaining and indeed revitalising higher education in that country. Watch this space!

In the meantime we are publishing herein the needs analysis, the various papers discussed at the conference and the ‘Cape Town Accord’ which resulted from it. We are sure these will be of considerable interest to anyone with an interest in the future of higher education, both in Zimbabwe and in the wider SADC region, and we therefore sincerely recommend them to you.

Piyushi Kotecha  
Series Editor  
Chief Executive Office  
SARUA
SARUA is a not-for-profit leadership association of the heads of the public universities in the 15 countries of the SADC region. Its mission is to promote, strengthen and increase higher education, research and innovation through expanded inter-institutional collaboration and capacity building initiatives throughout the region. It promotes universities as major contributors towards building knowledge economies, and towards national and regional socio-economic and cultural development, and also the eradication of poverty.

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD 2

ABBREVIATIONS 7

INTRODUCTION 8

CO-OPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES IN THE SADC REGION – Pam Watson 9
• Introduction 9
• Regional Co-operation in Higher Education 10
• Co-operation in postgraduate programmes 12
• Practices elsewhere 13
• Research results 16
  – Perceived benefits of regional collaboration 17
  – Practices in collaboration in postgraduate studies 19
  – Challenges to collaboration 23
• Recommendations 26
  – What governments can do 26
  – What donors can do 28
  – What institutions can do 29
• References 31

REBUILDING HIGHER EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE: A NEEDS ANALYSIS – Piyushi Kotecha and Helene Perold 33
• Introduction 33
• The higher education landscape in Zimbabwe 34
• Zimbabwe’s higher education sector in relation to the SADC region 36
• Higher education in Zimbabwe the last decade – What happened? 38
• Needs analysis of public universities in Zimbabwe 39
  – Teaching and learning 40
  – Research 40
  – Management 41
  – Governance and planning 42
  – Infrastructure 42
  – Partnership experience in the Zimbabwe higher education sector 43
• Other initiatives taken to strengthen higher education institutions 44
  – Strategies to improve financial circumstances 44
  – Strategies to ensure staff retention 45
  – Supporting research, teaching and learning 45
  – Facilities and equipment 46
• Emerging insights 46
• References 49
CONSIDERATIONS FROM INSIDE ZIMBABWE REGARDING THE REBUILDING OF ITS HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM – Christopher Chetsanga

• Abstract
• Introduction
• Earlier Strides in Zimbabwe Higher Education
• Onset of Economic Decline
• UNESCO Commissioned Investigation
• Impact of the Brain Drain
• Current State of Affairs in Universities
• Strengthening Zimbabwe’s Higher Education System
• Diaspora Excursions are Global
• Development of Knowledge Network Strategy
• ZIMCHE Request to South African Universities
• Conclusion
• Bibliography

LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE ON REBUILDING HIGHER EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE: PRIORITIES AND PROSPECTS – Mark Burke

• Introduction
• Perspectives
  – Regional Higher Education Identity Perspective
  – Dialogical Perspective
  – Network Perspective
• From dialogue to initiative
  – Interests
  – Incipient Themes
  – Initiatives and insights
• Conclusion and call for action
  – The Cape Town Accord and A Call for Action, 24 April 2010
• References
**ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AERC</td>
<td>African Economic Research Consortium</td>
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<tr>
<td>CODESRIA</td>
<td>Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAAD</td>
<td>German Academic Exchange Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>DePHE</td>
<td>Development and Partnership in Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GZU</td>
<td>Greater Zimbabwe University</td>
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<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Centre</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>INASP</td>
<td>International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICRA</td>
<td>International Centre for Development Oriented Research in Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSU</td>
<td>Lupane State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUST</td>
<td>National University of Science and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSU</td>
<td>Midlands State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>RISE</td>
<td>Regional Initiative in Science and Education</td>
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<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
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<td>SANPAD</td>
<td>South Africa Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development</td>
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<td>SARUA</td>
<td>Southern African Regional Universities Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>S&amp;T</td>
<td>Science and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>STI</td>
<td>Science and Technology Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>USHEIPIA</td>
<td>University Science, Humanities and Engineering Partnership in Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZAS</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Academy of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZDL</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Diaspora Lecturer</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZIMCHE</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Council on Higher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZUVCA</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Universities’ Vice-Chancellors Association</td>
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INTRODUCTION

On April 2010, the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) convened a leadership dialogue workshop in response to a call from the Chair of the Zimbabwe University Vice-Chancellors’ Association for regional support in rebuilding Zimbabwe’s higher education sector. All Vice-Chancellors of higher education institutions in the region, or their representatives, were invited to participate in the workshop.

The workshop examined a needs analysis of the higher education sector in Zimbabwe as a basis for developing a framework for collaboration with higher education institutions throughout the SADC region, in an effort to address some of the most urgent priorities identified. This publication documents the inputs into the dialogue process and the frame that guided the conversation at the workshop.

The first paper reports the outcomes of a research project undertaken by SARUA in which the extent and perceived benefits of regional co-operation, the forms of collaboration in postgraduate studies that exist in the region and the constraints to regional collaboration, are examined. It explores and locates regional co-operation in the context of the process of internationalisation occurring in higher education. It also describes the practices elsewhere in the world and reports the research results. The paper concludes by making a series of proposals on the respective roles government, donors and higher education institutions can play in promoting collaboration in the region.

The second paper served as an input at the dialogue meeting and reports the results of a needs analysis undertaken to identify the current needs and priorities of public universities in Zimbabwe. It notes the significant contribution that the higher education system in Zimbabwe has made to the region, and analyses the developments in the sector over the last decade. The paper reports on the findings of the analysis with specific reference to the needs in fields of teaching, learning, research and collaboration. In addition, the paper reports on a range of initiatives aimed at strengthening the higher education sector in the country, before it concludes with emerging insights gained through the needs-analysis process.

The third contribution provides a reflection on the state of the higher education system from within Zimbabwe. It describes the decline of the higher education system, with a particular focus on the effects of the economic decline experienced in the country. The paper explores proposals for strengthening the system and concludes with a request to higher education institutions based specifically in South Africa.

The final paper describes the unfolding of the dialogue process and its outcomes by locating it in the context of SARUA’s efforts to build a regional higher education identity through dialogue and networking activities. It concludes by documenting the Cape Town Accord and Call to Action as the outcome of the dialogue process.

May 2010
CO-OPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES IN THE SADC REGION

– Pam Watson

INTRODUCTION

Development of the systems of higher education in the Southern African region is crucial to releasing the capacity of higher education to contribute more fully to development in the region. National systems of higher education, however, are in most instances relatively weak, having suffered the effects of years of underfunding. Regional collaboration has been proposed as a means to strengthen these systems. Policies such as; the African Union’s Second Decade of Education, and their Harmonisation Policy on Higher Education, as well as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Education, all talk of the need for this co-operation, that has been agreed on a political level.

Although there may be debate regarding the mechanisms and the means for collaboration, at a political level, the fundamental notion of co-operation between institutions, with the broader goal of enhancing institutional performance, is well accepted.

At the same time, increasing the amount and the quality of postgraduate study is essential to contributing to increasing levels of research and high-level skills, and to developing future academics for the region. Yet, previous research conducted by the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) shows the low number of postgraduate registrations and graduates especially outside of South Africa. This area is clearly one in which regional co-operation is most needed.

Whilst it is known that there are collaborative agreements in this regard between institutions in the region, and that there are a number of other bodies active in the area of postgraduate support, there is little sense of the extent to which collaboration agreements have been entered into, the form that

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1 Pam Watson (PhD). Email: watsonp@worldonline.co.za
these agreements take, and their impact on the countries involved. Moreover, there is little sense of co-
ordination between activities in this field.

Although there are some elements of collaboration, particularly with regard to research collaboration,
that do not necessarily have a bearing on co-operation in postgraduate studies, many of the
challenges facing collaboration generally will also apply to co-operation in postgraduate studies.
The two dimensions are thus examined in tandem here.

The purpose of this document is to examine these issues through the responses to two sets of
questionnaires circulated to institutions in the region. The document examines the extent and perceived
benefits of regional collaboration generally, the forms of collaboration currently found in postgraduate
studies in the region, and the constraints currently acting on collaboration activities in the region.
The document concludes by drawing, from the findings, a set of recommendations which would aid
the development of further co-operation activities, and particularly collaborations in postgraduate
programmes.

REGIONAL CO-OPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Historically, higher education institutions and the individuals working within them have always
collaborated across national divides. However, the past two decades have seen a huge increase in
these initiatives and a new focus on both ‘internationalisation’ and ‘cross-border provision’. These
developments have been driven by global trends towards the internationalisation of knowledge but
have also, in many instances, been driven by a profit agenda. Nonetheless, in developing countries, such
cross-border provision is also seen as a mechanism for enhancing capacity:

Some countries lack the domestic capacity to meet all their tertiary education demands or could benefit
from foreign experience and knowledge to improve the quality of their tertiary education system. Cross-
border education can typically help to quickly expand a tertiary education system and to increase the
country’s stock of highly skilled human capital. It also gives a benchmark to academics and institutions
on the quality and the relevance of their services and can lead to organisational learning, thanks to
partnerships, both at the institutional and system levels, which may lead to healthy competition and
quality enhancement. (OECD, 2007, p. 12)


7 These two terms are defined by Knight (2007, Cross-border Tertiary Education: An Introduction, in OECD, World Bank and CERI, Cross-border Tertiary Education: A Way towards Capacity Development; ISBN 978-92-64-03363-4) as follows:
Internationalisation of higher education is described as ‘the process of integrating an international, intercultural, and global dimension into the purpose, functions (teaching, research, service) and the delivery of higher education’. It refers to all aspects of internationalisation, whether it involves cross-border mobility or not. (p. 23 citing Knight 2004), and
Cross-border education refers to the movement of people, programmes, providers, curricula, projects, research and services across national or regional jurisdictional borders. Cross-border education is a subset of internationalisation and can be part of development co-operation projects, academic
exchange programmes and commercial initiatives. (p. 24)

In Southern Africa the notion of co-operation to enhance regional capacity in higher education has been embraced at a political level, with policy documents ranging from the SADC Protocol on Education to the African Union’s Plan for the Second Decade of Education referring to the need for countries to collaborate to enhance their capacities, both nationally and as a regional sector. This concern, to enhance regional higher education capacity, is driven by pragmatic concerns, and by the reality of comparatively weak national systems. In most cases, access to higher education is low and systems are small (see Graph 1 below). In addition, years of underfunding of the sector in most countries, under the guise of structural adjustment programmes, have under-capacitated systems to a critical level.

Indications are that enrolments have recently increased throughout the region. Mauritius in particular has increased its enrolment ratios considerably in recent years. However, even when these increases are taken into account, it is clear that the gross enrolment ratios in the region are below the world mean for lower and middle income countries (20%), and considerably below the mean for upper-middle income (42%) and high-income countries (72%). Combined with the lack of staff, the poor research output and the many other problems that beset higher education in the region, this clearly evidences the current weaknesses in the regional system of higher education.

9 The term ‘regional’ is used in two different ways in the literature. Much of literature from the west uses the term to refer to the development of the local community and economy in geographical proximity to an institution. In Africa, the term tends to be used much more broadly to refer to supra-national regions, as defined by the Regional Economic Communities of the continent.

10 At note 3
11 At note 1


13 Data drawn from the World Bank Edustats website, op cit, January 2010

CO-OPERATION IN POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

As the SADC Protocol on Education and Training points out, the Region requires first rate programmes of post-graduate education and training and both basic and applied research … higher education systems are major performers of research and are critical for the development of human resources for research and development.\(^\text{16}\)

Yet, previous SARUA research\(^\text{17}\) shows the low levels of postgraduate education in the SADC region. This clearly affects the production of high-level skills in the region, as well as the research and the academic capacity. As an illustration, in the most recent year for which data was available, the number of PhD graduations in the region, excluding South Africa, was 143 (see Table 1 below). Even within South Africa, concern has been raised about the inadequacy of postgraduate training:

The production of university graduates – and especially postgraduate students – is an essential component of the national system of innovation of modern industrialised societies. Such graduates have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills that underpin the modern knowledge economy and are able to produce new knowledge. In a globalised world their skills are in high demand, whether they are in Engineering, Information and Communication Technology, Medicine or the Social Sciences and Humanities. It is generally recognised that South Africa does not have sufficient numbers of highly skilled people in most professions … The greatest shortage is at postgraduate level.\(^\text{18}\)

There is thus a crucial need to increase the number of postgraduate students registered for, and graduating from, postgraduate programmes in the region.

Table 1: Number of Postgraduate registrations and graduations in the SADC region\(^\text{19}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Masters degrees</th>
<th>Doctoral degrees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Registrations</td>
<td>Graduations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science, Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>12 840</td>
<td>3 053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, Management and Law</td>
<td>17 440</td>
<td>3 625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities and Social Sciences</td>
<td>19 438</td>
<td>3 482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>7 550</td>
<td>994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57 660</td>
<td>11 253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Total excluding South Africa)</td>
<td>(15 993)</td>
<td>(3 742)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{16}\) At note 3; (Article 8.1)
\(^\text{19}\) Data drawn from Butcher et al. (at note 18), pp. 87 and 93.
Co-operation amongst higher education institutions has been proposed as a means of increasing capacity in the region for postgraduate study offerings. The SADC Protocol continues:

mounting robust post-graduate programmes in all required fields is too costly for each member state to pursue on a realistically sustainable basis and therefore it is essential to pool the region’s resources in order to establish high quality post-graduate programmes.  

Co-operation can provide a means of sharing and developing qualified staff, of sharing physical infrastructure, library holdings, and equipment, and of developing capacity in programme design. Other benefits would include the pooling of available resources, building communities of scholars, promoting cultural ties, and developing comparable standards in the region. In the absence of planned co-operation activities, unplanned movement of students and staff tends to result in internal brain drain (and gain) within the region: another potential area of benefit for planned co-operation activities may thus lie in the mitigation of brain drain.

Joint or split-site teaching, as well as staff and student exchanges, collaborative research, and the creation of centres of specialisation have all been proposed as mechanisms to address regional improvement in postgraduate teaching capacity. However, there are a number of potential constraints to offering programmes of this nature. These include restrictions on movement within the region (immigration formalities) and different systems of education within the constituent countries, which pose challenges with regard to degree access or recognition requirements. Although policy documents attempt to address these issues, implementation has been slow. In addition, current regional imbalances in capacity may have the potential to be reinforced if the fundamental principles of collaboration are not thoroughly considered.

**PRACTICES ELSEWHERE**

As noted above, there has been a large increase in internationalisation and cross-border activities in higher education in recent times. There are many different forms of activities. Most controversial is the movement of foreign providers into a national domain (expected to become an increasing trend under the General Agreement on Trade in Services). However, in some instances, such provision has aided in increasing access to higher education; in others, concerns have been raised regarding the quality of these offerings, as well as their implications for student equity.

More relevant to this project is the increase in partnership activities in higher education of various kinds. Indeed, ‘(i)nternational partnership spanning various organisational and geographical boundaries has emerged as the dominant paradigm for organising modern scientific research; and for undertaking international development policy.”

The extent of this interest is evidenced by the number of guideline documents on ‘good practice’ in cross-border education released by various organisations in the past decade. The International

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20 At note 3; (Article 7.0.1)
21 e.g. Mohamedbhai, G. (2002) Globalisation and Its Implications on Universities in Developing Countries, paper presented at the International Conference on Globalisation: What issues are at stake for universities, Quebec, Canada.
Association of Universities, in conjunction with the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada and the American Council on Education have released a ‘Checklist for Good Practice’ for cross-border education, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has similarly released a ‘guidelines’ document, and United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in conjunction with the European Centre for Higher Education has done the same. The European Universities Association has released a document entitled ‘Guidelines for Quality Enhancement in European Joint Master Programmes’.

Along with the general interest in cross-border education there has been widespread attention given to issues of comparability and co-operation in postgraduate studies, and particularly in joint programmes of postgraduate study. To a large extent, this interest has been led from Europe, particularly through the SOCRATES and, more recently, the ERASMUS MUNDUS programmes. Tauch and Rauhvargers provide the following explanation for this interest:

joint degree co-operation will boost the development of joint quality assurance, the recognition of degrees and qualifications across the European Higher Education Area, the transparency and convergence of higher education systems, student and staff mobility, the international employability of graduates, the European dimension of studies and the attractiveness of European education…. The overall effect of a programme is greater than the sum of its parts. Each partner institution covers that part of the joint programme for which it is most competent and technically advanced, with the result that the same resources achieve a far greater impact. (p. 42)

Both this study, and those that have followed, point to high level of support for joint degrees in Europe. Partnerships are usually based on inter-institutional rather than intergovernmental agreements and are most typically between two institutions. However, subject-based networks have also emerged. The actual models in use for these degrees differ; most commonly, they are based on credit recognition. A study by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) points to three different models of joint degrees in use in Europe: a) identical structure and content of the curriculum in each participating institution; b) comparable courses in the core curriculum of the study programme in each institution and different offers of specialist options by the different partners; and c) complementary courses as a mandatory part of the study programme offered by different partner institutions. Each model has different strengths in terms of its flexibility for students and teaching staff, and in terms of the advantages

31 Maiworm, F. (2006) Results of the Survey on Study Programmes Awarding Double, Multiple or Joint Degrees, Study Commissioned by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Rectors Conference (HRK) <http://www.eu.daad.de/imperia/md/content/eu/sokrates/veranstaltungen/38-report2.pdf> accessed 17 June 2009.
which it may provide in academic efficiencies (model a, for example, provides the highest flexibility in terms of mobility, but has no real advantages with regard to academic workload or outcomes).

Experience from these programmes has shown that co-operation can bring benefits at both policy level and at institutional level. A recent evaluation of the ERASMUS student mobility programme in Europe suggests that the programme has had positive effects on policies leading towards European Higher Education Area (and has shown effects, for example, on the establishment of comparable degrees and credit transfer systems, on the promotion of mobility, and on the development of systematic quality assurance). At the institutional level, the programme has had an impact on professionalising management, increasing international networks, improving the quality of teaching and learning, and improving the transparency and transferability of qualifications. An unanticipated outcome of the programme has been the positive impact on research improvement through a ‘triggering effect on increasing the participation in international projects’.

Benefits have also been found at the individual level for the student, with student mobility providing for the development of a range of social, linguistic and inter-cultural management skills. In addition, benefits have accrued to individual academics through increasing networks, collaborative activities and mutual learning.

Above all, the studies cited, document a number of challenges that arise from offering joint degrees. Regulations for the recognition of these qualifications may not exist in national legislation. Particularly in the case of cross-national joint degrees, authority for such recognition may fall outside of national qualification and quality assurance requirements. In addition, the award of a qualification in the name of multiple institutions is often disallowed (meaning that either a double degree is awarded, or a degree from a single one of the participating institutions must be granted). Laws may also prevent students from registering at more than one institution, or may stipulate a minimum number of credits that must be obtained at the degree-granting institution. Differing academic calendars may make mobility difficult.

Issues of quality assurance are also brought to the fore when provision takes place across national borders. In most instances, national or international bodies are not set up to deal with programmes of this nature. This places a higher responsibility on the institutions themselves to ensure that similar criteria are being applied at the level of the institution: common admissions criteria, similar credit systems, peer review mechanisms, teacher evaluations, and internal quality assurance processes.

The most critical problem identified, however, is funding. The funding required for collaborative programmes is typically higher than for normal programmes, both in respect of curriculum development costs and for staff and student mobility. Funding to enable this mobility is crucial particularly where student equity is a concern. Student support mechanisms are necessary to aid in adjustment to new environments. And sustaining networks of academics in particular fields also requires resources. There is an important caution in this finding: collaboration is often proposed as a mechanism to deal with resource constraints. Yet, findings show that it is a resource-intensive activity, and cannot succeed without adequate provision for this fact.

34 European Universities Association at note 27
Finally, although many benefits have been found to these arrangements, the studies stress that these benefits do not follow automatically: programmes need to be carefully structured, planned, and supported if they are to achieve their desired effects.

**Research Results**

The research reported here relies on two sources of information: responses to a questionnaire circulated in 2008 to all higher education institutions in the Southern African region regarding collaboration activities (44 institutional responses were received from 12 countries), and a 2009 follow-up questionnaire specifically on collaboration in postgraduate activities. The response rate for the latter questionnaire was low (a total of 16 responses were received, of which six contained detailed information regarding all activities with other institutions in the SADC region); however, on the basis of the data that is available over both surveys, certain inferences can be drawn regarding the extent of collaboration in the region.

The research results show that collaboration tends to be:

- More North-South than regional.
- More informal than formal.
- More within country (particularly in the case of South Africa) than regional.

Furthermore, it is evident that there are few formal collaboration activities in postgraduate programmes in the region. For example, in the responses to the 2008 survey, a total of 127 collaboration efforts were listed by respondents. Of these, only 34 involved SADC regional institution partners (and only 4 of these did not involve South Africa). Although no claims can be made regarding the completeness of this data, the data shows a proportion of 27% of collaboration efforts within the region, versus 73% out of region. Countries most typically involved in out-of-region collaborations include the United States of America, Norway, France and Germany (with other frequent collaborators being Belgium, Finland, Denmark, China, the United Kingdom and Sweden).

North-South partnership arrangements have a mixed record of success. Although some have provided extremely valuable opportunities for development, stories abound of initiatives whose benefit to the region is less evident. In some cases, although qualifying for donor aid, these initiatives have amounted to little more than providing a venue for field visits by foreign (Northern) students. Such projects are very often not determined by the specific needs of the Southern institution, and may not be of a sufficient term to have lasting impact. However, although there are unavoidable imbalances in relations between institutions in wealthy and in less-wealthy nations, provided that these relations are carefully managed and that the local institutions’ priorities and needs are taken into account, there are strong benefits of collaborative relationships between institutions in the North and those in the South. Funding typically follows these initiatives. They provide opportunities for capacity enhancement in research and for expanding academic networks as well as for the translation of knowledge into development projects.

But collaboration with the North is insufficient to aiding in the development of a strong higher education sector in Africa:

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35 Survey conducted by Butcher et al, at note 18.
36 Obamba, M.O. and kimbuwa, J. at note 23.
If African research is to be strengthened, then African researchers need to be better connected to each other, as well as to the rest of the world. Improving collaboration and networking within Africa must be a priority.¹⁷

Increased networks of expertise will have benefits regardless of their geographical proximity. However, contextual relevance is more likely to be assured when working with regional partners and engaging in issues of common importance. South-South partnerships may also cultivate regional self-reliance, as well as contributing towards the development of a compatible sector.

Although this is the conventional wisdom in the political sphere, the perceptions of higher education institutions themselves in this regard have not previously been surveyed. In the research reported below, questionnaire responses regarding the benefits of collaboration, the forms of postgraduate collaborations in the region, and the main obstacles to collaboration are reported. Responses have been broadly categorised and were not treated quantitatively, as the questions posed were open-ended and were not designed to probe the extent of agreement with any particular statement. However, for both the benefits and constraints sections, categories are reported below in terms of the frequency of the comments received.

**Perceived benefits of regional collaboration**

Broadly clustered categories indicate two major groups of responses to the question of perceived benefits of regional collaboration. Unsurprisingly, these clusters relate to increasing sector capacity at a number of levels, and to increasing knowledge within the region. Quality improvements, and an increasing contribution towards development initiatives, were also regularly cited.

The full list of response categories is given in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Categorised responses regarding the benefits of collaboration in the region**

| Improved opportunities for knowledge exchange: | Responses in this category referred to the benefits of knowledge exchange, and a majority of responses spoke of increasing possibilities for staff and/or student exchanges. Very often this statement was left unclarified, but it was sometimes explained in terms of the increasing potential for the sharing of ideas, expertise and good practice. |
| Improved opportunities and capacity for research: | Responses in this category refer to possibilities for collaborating on common problems, developing critical databases for the region, developing research capacity and improving publication rates in the region. |

| **Increasing knowledge and experience:** | Developing a broader knowledge base (contributing to new knowledge as opposed to exchanging existing knowledge), increasing knowledge about and developing a better understanding of the region, providing intellectual stimulation and increasing international exposure were typical responses in this category. |
| **Increased capacity particularly with regard to staff and postgraduate students:** | Collaboration in staff training, skills development and research capacity development, as well as the development of graduate studies and, through this, a critical mass of scholars, were seen as important possible benefits. |
| **Sharing of resources:** | Respondents felt that, given current capacity constraints, there was a need to look at sharing of infrastructure, facilities, knowledge resources, and expertise. Some respondents also suggested that collaboration was a means of avoiding duplication and achieving economies of scale. |
| **Quality improvements:** | A number of respondents felt that collaboration would enhance the quality of higher education in the region, through benchmarking, harmonisation of programmes, enhanced quality assurance mechanisms, and exposure to peer review mechanisms, for example. |
| **Impact on development:** | Respondents saw benefits in addressing regional problems collectively through research, skills development and the orientation of the student experience to regional development challenges. |
| **Increased capacity for teaching:** | The need to improve teaching and possibilities, through collaboration, for teaching and academic development were mentioned. The potential for increased absorption capacity in the sector as a whole was also felt to be a possible outcome. |
| **Improved funding opportunities:** | Some respondents felt that joint cross-national projects were likely to have more success in bidding for major international funding. |
| **Increased opportunities with regard to higher education markets:** | Market-oriented responses typically viewed collaboration as a means of enhancing their own institution’s standing, particularly through broadening the pool of potential students and also through the development of partnerships. |
| **Developing regional identity:** | A few respondents spoke from the perspective of a vision of a unified region, speaking of the need to promote intra-regional relations, collegiality and long-term relationships between institutions. |
Respondents felt that co-operation increased the likelihood of locally-relevant curricula being developed, with increased links between locally relevant research and teaching content.

Collective bargaining as a sector, making the case for higher education development in the region, and the development of a regional body to speak on behalf of the sector, were some of the possibilities listed here.

A small number of respondents felt that diversity in their staff and student bodies could be improved through further links with regional partners.

The comments received paint a very positive picture of the potential benefits of regional collaboration in higher education. They show a high level of agreement, within a fairly wide range of responses. There are few surprises in the list: the institutional view of the potential benefits of collaboration is very close to that espoused in formal policy documents.

Not all of these benefits may be realistic, however: there is little spare capacity in any system in the region and it is unlikely that collaboration will have a major impact on increased access to higher education generally. Nevertheless, at postgraduate level this may be achievable, particularly if the focus is on building capacity (qualifications, research and supervision ability) to enable a higher number of postgraduate students to be admitted in the future. The sharing of scarce and expensive infrastructure and equipment may provide for greater access to facilities, and thus contribute to building research fields in those areas. However, it is unlikely that economies of scale will be achieved through rationalisation of programmes (the region, if anything, suffers from an undersupply and not an oversupply of higher education options).

### Practices in collaboration in postgraduate studies

A number of SADC higher education institutions currently do not have any formal collaborative arrangements with other SADC institutions in regard to postgraduate programmes. However, the data obtained from this survey process has been used to construct a typology of potential collaborative postgraduate engagements in the region. Table 3 gives a typology of the types of arrangements that could be expected, and some indication of the frequency with which they occur. The categories are not mutually exclusive (in some cases, an initiative involves a combination of intervention types as given below), but are intended to provide a broad range of possible types of collaborations in postgraduate programmes. The table does not include individual student registration at institutions in other SADC countries; although there are a growing number of these registrations in many countries in the region (South Africa in particular has experienced a substantial growth in SADC national postgraduate registrations).
Table 3: Typology of postgraduate collaborations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Collaboration</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Government arrangements with respect to postgraduate study   | Historically, this is a model that has been widely used, usually taking the form of government subsided students to undertake postgraduate study in areas not provided in the home country.  
  e.g. Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia with South Africa             |
| elsewhere                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Contractual arrangements regarding full provision of        | A similar arrangement as above, but negotiated between institutions. Some recent examples of this model were found.  
  postgraduate training in specified areas                     |  
  e.g. Agostinho Neto University with Polytechnic Namibia;  
  University of Namibia and Rhodes University in Computer  
  Science (with collaborative student supervision and research);  
  Initiatives under the Regional Initiative in Science and  
  Education (RISE) scheme (see below);  
  University Science, Humanities and Engineering Partnerships in  
  Africa (USHEPIA) project (see below)                         |
| Joint or double degree offered (i.e. more than one certifying| Although this is becoming a common model elsewhere in the world (e.g. Europe), no examples were found in this region. (Under South African policy, this model is not currently permitted.) |
| institution)                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Formal course recognition arrangements                       | The type of formal course recognition and credit arrangements which would allow a qualification to be issued from a single institution, while course requirements had been completed at multiple institutions, (the common model as found in Europe), was not found amongst SADC institutions in this research, although student exchanges were occasionally mentioned in conjunction with other modes of collaboration. |
| Collaborative regional degrees                               | Although there is a single registering and certifying institution per student, the programme is offered at a number of participating institutions, usually with a common core curriculum.  
  e.g. African Economic Research Consortium (AERC); RUFORUM   |
| Co-teaching on degree courses                                | This is fairly common practice in some fields, but it is dependent on individual networks, and is often not reported as collaboration activity.  
  e.g. Zululand University with other South African institutions in Psychology;  
  Rhodes University with Namibian Colleges of Education for maths  
  education and for educational leadership and management.     |

39 Examples cited are illustrative only and are not intended to imply the full range of existing initiatives.
40 (http://sites.ias.edu/sig/rise) Networks include: African Materials Science and Engineering Network; African Natural Products Network; Southern African Biochemistry and Informatics for Natural Products Network; Sub-Saharan Africa Water Resources Network; Western Indian Ocean Regional Initiative. (Not Southern Africa specific).
42 (http://www.aercafrica.org/programmes/training.asp) AERC runs a collaborative master’s programme in economics throughout Anglophone Africa, and a collaborative PhD programme for sub-Saharan Africa. The masters programme ‘features joint enforcement of standards through annual evaluation and assessment by external evaluators, a common curriculum and its development, a joint facility for teaching electives, and joint development of teaching materials’. (Not Southern Africa specific).
43 (http://ruforum.org/drupal/node/6) RUFORUM runs a regional MSc and PhD programme in agricultural sciences, which is offered through individual universities, with collaboration where necessary. (Not Southern Africa specific).
| **Curriculum collaboration** | Although some responses did refer to curriculum collaboration, it was unclear how frequently this occurred or what form the collaboration took. Collaborative curriculum development may also happen as a result of other forms of involvement (like external examining).  
| | e.g. Rhodes University with University of Malawi in Journalism and Media Studies, and with Namibia, Angola, Malawi and Mozambique in Ichthyology and Fisheries Science; Universities of Namibia, Eduardo Mondlane and the Witwatersrand in biological sciences, economics and labour studies and engineering. |
| **Peer review of courses** | Historically this has not been common practice in the region, but it is likely to increase as quality assurance regimes take hold.  
| | Most examples here are within the South African context. e.g. North West University, University of Johannesburg and Wits University in Engineering. |
| **External examiners** | This is a fairly common practice, but is dependent on individual networks and may not be reported as collaboration activity. e.g. Zululand with Swaziland in Philosophy; North West University and individuals in various SADC countries in Business Studies. |
| **Collaboration with regard to research supervision** | A number of examples of this type of collaboration were found, and this does appear to be a growing model. e.g. Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Malawi and South African institutions in Information Systems; Tanzania, Malawi and others in Business Studies; Rhodes with Botswana, Mozambique, Zimbabwe in Geology; Mzumbe University and the University of Malawi for joint supervision of staff members doing doctorates. |
| **Collaboration with regard to research facilities** | This form of collaboration is infrequently mentioned, although examples were found. There is an overlap with other categories such as institutional arrangements and student exchanges. e.g. Zululand and the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal in Housing and Urban and Regional Planning. |
| **Staff exchanges for teaching and research purposes connected to a particular degree** | Although some examples of this nature were found, these tend to be individual initiatives rather than formal exchange programmes, and are often not reported as collaboration activity. There is an overlap between this category and others, such as curriculum collaboration. e.g. Mozambique, Mauritius, Botswana, Swaziland, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South African institutions in Environmental Education and Sustainability. |
Although this form of collaboration is mentioned frequently, this is not necessarily linked to postgraduate studies.

There are a number of initiatives of this nature, some of which are institutionally independent. At PhD level these may be extra-curricular. e.g. Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), South African Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD).

As the examples in the table above show, collaboration activities in postgraduate studies are occurring between the institutions in Southern Africa. Many of the better-known schemes, however, are not specifically limited to the SADC region, but rather operate on an Africa-wide basis. Close examination of the data also reveals that, although a number of institutions are engaged in these endeavours, institutional involvement is in fact fairly thin – typically it is the same institutions that are involved in a number of initiatives. These are typically traditional research-intensive institutions, and collaborations are most often within the science and engineering fields. Initiatives in the humanities and social sciences feature less often, and the technology-based and applied fields of study have not yet received the same focus of attention.

The data also shows that the current prevalence in forms of postgraduate co-operation, as reported by institutions, is towards initiatives which rely on individual contacts and individual participation in networks. To some extent this is unsurprising given the nature of academic work (individual, autonomous, expertise-based, and also related to capacity and work load). However, the impact of individual initiatives on overall system development is likely to be slower than that of more formalised initiatives which allow for the best use of capacity, and the development of common understandings of quality.

Possibly the most critical target group for collaborative postgraduate programmes is existing staff members of regional institutions. Upgrading the qualifications of this group develops capacity for research and subsequent postgraduate training at their home institutions. Some of the most successful models of postgraduate collaboration that have emerged in the past two decades are based on this understanding. Such initiatives may be combined with a network approach to capacity building, where development is not limited to the postgraduate training alone, but extends to continued support and engagement between participants.

The network approach has considerable benefits in long-term capacity building for the region. Both CODESRIA and the AERC, widely regarded as successful capacity-building organisations, use this model. The RISE initiative supported by the Carnegie Corporation in partnership with the African Academy of Sciences, runs five successful qualification upgrading and network-type initiatives in Africa. There appears to be no shortage of networks in Africa: a 2007 investigation by the Partnership for Higher

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44 [http://www.codesria.org/training_grants.html](http://www.codesria.org/training_grants.html) CODESRIA offers methodology training and ‘summer institute’ workshops in the social sciences (Not Southern Africa specific).

45 [http://www.sanpad.org.za/phase3/](http://www.sanpad.org.za/phase3/) The SANPAD RCI programme, which was traditionally worked within South Africa but has more recently been extended to the SADC region, provides research support and methodology training for PhD students. The programme has had remarkable success in terms of subsequent student graduations.
Education in Africa identified over 120 networks. Not all, however, are functioning effectively, and most operate at an individual, rather than an institutional level, and therefore provide limited benefit in terms of institutional capacity building. However, when combined with a focus on institutional capacity building, this model holds great potential for regional higher education development.

Another successful model of capacity building is the model used by the USHEPiA programme, coordinated through the University of Cape Town, that focuses on postgraduate education in science, engineering and the humanities. A strong benefit of this model is that it has proceeded through agreements between the involved institutions themselves, to directly address the needs of these institutions, and to maintain a strong focus on capacity-building to mutual benefit. As outlined in the USHEPiA report (1002–2007),

The ultimate goal is to build on existing potential to develop a network of African researchers capable of addressing the developmental requirements of Sub-Saharan Africa. This is to be achieved by:

- Identifying areas of strength on which to build
- Ensuring mutual benefits in any collaboration
- Emphasising staff development
- Developing sustainable research collaboration
- Concentrating research in fields particularly appropriate to Africa’s needs
- Sharing access to specialised facilities
- Producing joint research papers in quality journals

Postgraduate student registrations, in this model, may be at the home university or at the University of Cape Town, co-supervision is encouraged, and the model includes staff exchanges, external examining and joint research. This holistic approach contributes to a well-developed model of capacity building.

Challenges to collaboration

The research also queried perceived constraints on collaboration activity. Responses are shown in Table 4 below. As can be seen, a large proportion of these responses referred to a lack of financial and other resources for collaborative efforts. The difficulties inherent in working across the region (large distances, language and cultural differences) were also cited, as well as excessive workloads and other motivational issues. In addition, many of the barriers to movement and qualification portability, which the SADC Protocol attempts to address, are still felt to be restricting activities.
### Table 4: Categorised responses regarding the challenges to / constraints acting on collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial:</strong></td>
<td>Many respondents noted the general funding scarcity in the region. Collaboration is perceived as both expensive and of low priority, given other needs. Even where funds are found, sustainability of the initiative may be an issue. Finances are necessary for bursaries, staff exchanges, travel and accommodation. Student subsidies may also be in question in some circumstances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other resource constraints:</strong></td>
<td>Poor capacity at a number of institutions limits their capacity to engage in collaborative efforts – a lack of appropriately qualified staff, infrastructure (equipment, premises, accommodation facilities and laboratories), and library resources provides fewer opportunities for such initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information and communication technologies (ICT) and infrastructure:</strong></td>
<td>Mentioned almost as frequently as financial constraints, the lack of ability to communicate quickly and easily in the region is one of the fundamental limiters of collaborative efforts. Problems exist both at the level of national bandwidth capacity, and at institutional level, in terms of infrastructure and access to equipment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative and logistical issues:</strong></td>
<td>Logistical difficulties in collaboration include the distances involved, and the cost of working and travelling in the region. Critical also is the lack of administrative capacity at institutional level for the co-ordination of these efforts, as well as inflexibility of administrative procedures at institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivational issues:</strong></td>
<td>The chief motivational issue concerns the tension between institutional competitive interests and collaboration efforts. In addition, some respondents mentioned that there is some apathy amongst staff with regard to co-operating in regional endeavours; this may be linked to workload issues or lack of incentives. There is also a perception that South African students, in particular, lack interest in travelling in the region. The tension between academic freedom and the need to strategically manage collaboration was also mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language and cultural issues:</strong></td>
<td>There are three languages of study, and a wide range of different cultures within the region. This makes mobility and collaboration difficult. The European example shows that this is not an insurmountable problem; however, additional resources are required for effective student integration and orientation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Networking opportunities and knowledge about institutions in the region:</strong></td>
<td>Respondents spoke about a lack of knowledge about regional institutions, academics, and potential areas of collaboration, as well as a lack of funding to attend regional conferences or workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workload issues:</strong></td>
<td>Particularly given the increased demand for higher education and rising student numbers, academic workloads have risen enormously, and there is little time for additional collaborative engagements (which tend to be time-intensive). There are also few incentives at individual level for these engagements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visas and work / study permits:</strong></td>
<td>Despite being a specific goal of the SADC Protocol, legal restrictions are still widely viewed as imposing a constraint on staff and student movement. Full removal of visa and permit requirements are the ultimate goal, however, interim strategies could involve, for example, setting up specific offices for dealing with applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualification framework related:</strong></td>
<td>The lack of comparability of academic programmes, educational systems and academic years in the different countries of SADC causes difficulties for student mobility, as well as for attempts to develop cross-national programmes. Although work is progressing in SADC, on the development of a regional qualifications comparability framework, progress has been slow. Mutually agreed quality assurance mechanisms are essential to move this process forward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety and security issues:</strong></td>
<td>Political unrest in countries and incidents of xenophobia heighten concerns about travelling in the region, and discourage staff and student mobility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lack of co-ordination:</strong></td>
<td>Some respondents spoke of the lack of a structure for the co-ordination and management of co-operative efforts, and of the lack of a forum for the identification of collaboration opportunities. Others spoke of structures set up by funding agencies that do not work in the context of the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Imbalances in infrastructure, staffing and general co-operation arrangements:</strong></td>
<td>Lack of resources and infrastructure at some institutions not only limits their ability to participate in collaboration efforts, but also affects the type of relationships that develop in the region. Stronger institutions tend to dominate partnerships, which can lead to resentment. On the other hand, there tends to be less direct benefits flowing to the stronger partners in the relationships, and it is thus more difficult to secure staff involvement in collaborative initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preference for co-operation with the North:</strong></td>
<td>Existing co-operative agreements with institutions from the North may stem from long-standing, established relationships and partnerships. They also tend to have finances attached (although partnership dominance may be a problem). These partnerships may be a problem to the extent that they discourage engagements between institutions in the region, and thus the development of a strong regional sector.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brain drain: Brain drain from and within the region has led to diminished institutional capacity, and there are fears that collaboration may open opportunities for individuals which may lead to potential further loss from some institutions.

The constraints listed above are of two types – resource-related constraints that can act as a real limitation on activities, and issues of management at national and institutional level. Financial and other resource constraints, communication technologies and infrastructure, administrative and logistical issues, and workload issues can be placed in the first category. These are fundamental limitations, which can only be dealt with through an increase in resources themselves. Falling into the second category, at the level of the institutional management, are issues such as motivation, language and culture, networking opportunities, management of contractual arrangements, and the management of brain drain. At the level of governments, issues of work and study permits, qualification and quality assurance frameworks, and safety and security are key. These second-category constraints are issues which are more amenable to strategic intervention.

The overall responses to the survey show that regional collaboration, on the whole, is viewed positively. However, the data shows that, although the perceived benefits to collaboration are great, the obstacles to be overcome are daunting. This perhaps provides some indication of why, despite political pressure for increased collaboration, in practice, collaborative projects are not as widespread as could be expected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although collaboration is widely hailed as a potential means for development of higher education in the region, the findings of this study suggest caution in this assumption. Whilst benefits in terms of knowledge exchange and networking certainly can flow from collaborative arrangements, literature from elsewhere suggests that collaboration, and particularly collaboration in postgraduate studies, is highly resource-intensive. Yet a fundamental limitation in this region is the lack of resources, even for regular activities.

The survey has also identified a number of other constraints which serve to limit the extent to which collaboration activities can be engaged in. On the basis of these, as well as other responses to the survey, the section below sets out a set of recommendations at government, donor and institutional level aimed at diminishing these constraints. If perceptions regarding the benefits of regional collaboration are correct, creating an environment in which collaboration activities are made easier would enhance and strengthen the regional higher education system.

What governments can do

a) Remove legislative barriers

Although removal of constraints is agreed in the SADC Protocol, progress has been slow, and many institutions are still reporting that difficulties in obtaining the necessary permissions are hampering efforts towards staff and student mobility. Easing or dropping requirements regarding work and study visas for students and academic staff members, and simplifying bureaucratic procedures, would provide greater incentives for higher education and postgraduate collaboration activities.
The provision of ICT facilities is crucial to enabling effective communication in the region: without this, any form of collaboration is difficult. In addition, the lack of access to adequate ICT infrastructure limits access to research resources and thus further constrains regional development. In some countries, legislative barriers are specifically inhibiting the development of this infrastructure. In others, national prioritisation of the development of research and education networks would be of great benefit.

Excessive customs duties throughout the region make the purchase of ICT and other research equipment difficult. Removal of these duties would stimulate research productivity and innovation, and through this, would contribute to the development of a vital regional knowledge hub.

b) Create a conducive policy environment
Although there has been formal commitment to increased co-operation in higher education, by signing the SADC Protocol, there is little sense in many countries that these policy objectives are being translated into national policy priorities. Renewed commitment to the process, and visible promotion of its goals, would place the issue of regional co-operation more firmly on the agenda of national institutions.

Even in the absence of specific treaty objectives and strategies, collaboration in the region could benefit from government promotion of, and political support for, higher education collaboration and particularly for collaboration in postgraduate studies.

Collaboration efforts would be made considerably easier if processes were accelerated for putting national and regional qualification and quality assurance frameworks in place.

Safety and security are key issues of the region, and their absence serves as a fundamental constraint on mobility and collaboration. Efforts to provide a secure environment at national level must be encouraged.

c) Prioritise national higher education development
In order to facilitate inter-regional collaboration, it is essential to support and develop national systems and institutions. Ineffective and under-resourced institutions are themselves a barrier to collaboration. The lack of appropriate national frameworks and policies, for instance around quality assurance, similarly act as a constraint on regional activities. Collaboration, whilst holding great potential for development of the region and the nations within it, is not a panacea for the development of strong national systems.

d) Targeted funding
Although funding for higher education is a general concern, and there are urgent requirements for increased funding across the board, previous SARUA research has pointed to the need for targeted policy-driven funding models, and for clear funding principles for higher education in the region. Collaboration activities could be aided by providing specific funding aimed at increasing these activities.

In particular, funding could be directed through incentives offered for regional collaboration. Collaborative projects on problems endemic to Africa should also receive funding priority. National-equivalent treatment of, or funds for, students from other SADC countries would be of benefit. And most importantly, for increasing research and postgraduate collaboration, specific funds for staff and student exchanges would be of high value.

e) Facilitate networking
It is important that governments build and sustain relationships with their higher education institutions, so that channels of communication are opened and governments are well informed regarding the needs of the sector. Based on these understandings, as well as a clear understanding of the needs of the regional economy, it may be possible for governments to initiate discussions with SADC peers, which may lead to bi- or multi-lateral agreements with regard to co-operation in specific aspects of higher education, and specifically postgraduate provision. It may also be possible to co-ordinate the establishment of regional networks of excellence or research institutes, if appropriate.

What donors can do
a) Prioritise regional initiatives in funding consideration
The role of donors is critical to the region, and many of the successful initiatives to date have had strong donor support. Funding is necessary, amongst other things, for research and specifically research collaboration, for infrastructure development and equipment, for ICT development, and for staff capacity development. Most importantly, in order that regional collaboration can achieve its aim of a strengthened higher education sector throughout Southern Africa, donors could prioritise regional initiatives in funding consideration, promote and fund collaboration activities and incentives, and support the costs of the processes of collaboration, including the costs of co-ordinating the collaboration. Importantly, it must be recognised that collaboration requires long-term funding. Funding for staff and student exchanges and mobility are also key factors.

b) Manage collaboration relationships
It is necessary to acknowledge that collaboration relationships are often not unproblematic. On the one hand, it is important to ensure that collaboration works to the benefit of both partners and that benefits to the one partner in terms of, for example, increased student numbers, are matched by benefits to the other, for example in terms of staff or other capacity development. On the other hand, many existing initiatives between North–South partners are based on a deficit model of capacity development, and inadequately represent the contributions made by, and expertise in, the Southern partners. Much could be done to remedy this misrepresentation.

c) Communicate with institutions
Increased communication with the higher education institutions in SADC, through visits to, and the development of partnerships with these institutions, would assist in ensuring that projects are based on identified priorities of universities in the region. This would also help in making donor funding frameworks and priorities known to institutions. Inviting participation in co-operation endeavours may be useful to institutions that are not already well-networked. Processes for funding applications are currently seen as onerous: clearer communication of expectations and requirements may be of benefit.
d) Facilitate networking
Networking is seen as vital to increasing co-operation between the institutions in the region. In this regard, donors could fund regional conferences or workshops, or provide opportunities for networking that could lead to the development of joint projects.

e) Share information
Donors could also do much to contribute to information sharing in the region. This could take the form of sharing their expertise; hosting information portals and newsletters; documenting initiatives and sharing knowledge about regional collaboration initiatives that have worked elsewhere; making available an accessible database on regional co-operation; and promoting and facilitating the exchange of research results and information on other issues of common interest between institutions in the region.

f) Provide technical support
Finally, donors could also aid by providing technical support by supporting technology transfer projects.

**What institutions can do**

a) Promote, incentivise and reward collaboration activities
Institutions can aid the development of collaboration activities by promoting and supporting participation in regional activities, and providing incentives for staff to participate in these endeavours. Most importantly, they can recognise and reward the informal relationships that currently support regional development (such as external examining or co-supervision initiatives).

b) Manage collaboration relationships
Institutions can work to address imbalances in co-operation arrangements, by ensuring that the benefits of the co-operation work on both fronts; for example, if one partner benefits from increased student numbers, there should be a reciprocal benefit in terms of staff or curriculum development for the partner institution.

c) Collect and maintain data on regional involvement
Collecting and maintaining data regarding collaboration initiatives in the region is vital to understanding the extent of these initiatives as well as to collecting information regarding their impact. Data concerning formal contracts entered into with other regional institutions, data regarding the admission and success of students from other SADC countries, as well as data regarding the informal collaborative activities of members of staff with other institutions in the region would be valuable, and could be collected at institutional level.

d) Ensure transparency
It would be of great benefit to facilitate student movement and, in the absence of a regional qualifications framework, to be transparent regarding qualification recognition for admission purposes and for credit transfer possibilities. Where students from other countries are admitted, cultural and linguistic sensitivity as well as appropriate orientation and support should be provided.
e) Ensure sensitivity to cultural and language differences
In order to ensure the success of inter-regional collaboration initiatives, institutions must be sensitive to the cultural and linguistic differences of the region. This would entail, for example, providing appropriate orientation and support to incoming SADC national students.

f) Provide administrative support
Institutions should attempt to ensure that collaborative projects have the appropriate administrative support and the infrastructure for the project to be successful.

**Finally,** it is clear that there is also a role for regional organisations such as SARUA in promoting and developing collaboration activities. This role primarily is one of providing networking opportunities and information that can lead to institutions identifying potential partners and research projects that may develop into co-operative ventures. Such organisations should also collect and disseminate information regarding successful endeavours that could serve as models for further activities. Lastly, such organisations should, in all of their activities, promote the principles of mutual development and benefit.
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REBUILDING HIGHER EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE: A NEEDS ANALYSIS

– PIYUSHI KOTECHA51 AND HELENE PEROLD52

INTRODUCTION

In December 2009, the Chair of the Zimbabwe Universities’ Vice-Chancellors Association (ZUVCA) requested support from the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) to create an ‘operational blueprint’ for revitalising higher education in Zimbabwe. This request is broadly aligned with two high-level outcomes of SARUA’s strategic implementation plan (2010 and beyond): (1) to develop a regional identity for Southern African higher education out of a fragmented and disparate system, and (2) to enhance the collaboration between universities in the SADC region.

SARUA is mindful that the governance and planning of higher education is a national responsibility. As a player, external to Zimbabwe, SARUA thus seeks to support efforts towards the revitalising of higher education in Zimbabwe from its perspective as a facilitator of regional co-operation and dialogue in higher education.

SARUA thus responded to the ZUVCA request by convening a one-day workshop in Cape Town on 24 April 2010 to identify institutional, national and regional responses that could strengthen higher education in the region whilst responding to the needs of the Zimbabwean higher education sector. In this way it aimed to combine internal perspectives on the higher education crisis in Zimbabwe with external analysis and shared perspectives that can lead to collaborative arrangements and supportive action for Zimbabwean academics and researchers.

This paper provided one input into discussion by examining the higher education landscape in Zimbabwe. The information contained in this paper is drawn from available sources and outlines the findings of a needs analysis, conducted by SARUA in February and March 2010, into the priorities of nine public universities in Zimbabwe.

The needs analysis involved a rapid data-gathering exercise whereby the public universities were asked to provide information about their current needs and priorities, as well as their experience of partnerships. Responses varied in the amount of detail provided. SARUA is thus aware that the

51 Piyushi Kotecha is Chief Executive Officer, SARUA. Email: piyushi@sarua.org.
52 Helene Perold is Director of Helene Perold and Associates. Email: hperold@hpa.co.za.
information contained in the paper may need to be verified, and would be grateful for assistance in correcting any inaccuracies.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE IN ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe’s higher education sector comprises universities, polytechnics and teacher training colleges. Of the 13 universities, nine are state-funded and four privately owned. At the time of their establishment, these institutions developed their niche foci according to the gaps that existed in the economy. Between them the nine state universities offer a wide range of disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, business studies, architecture and the natural, health and pure sciences, and include engineering and agriculture.

The public and private university landscape in Zimbabwe is as follows:

Table 1: Public and Private Higher Education Institutions in Zimbabwe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nine Public Higher Education Institutions</th>
<th>Four Private Higher Education Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Solusi College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlands State University</td>
<td>Africa University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lupane State University</td>
<td>The Catholic University of Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National University of Science and Technology</td>
<td>Arrupe University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Zimbabwe University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bindura University of Science and Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinhoyi University of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harare Institute of Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe Open University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The public universities are at different stages of development and maturity, with the oldest, now known as the University of Zimbabwe, having been established during colonial times in 1957 and the next one, the National University of Science and Technology, having been established in 1991. Zimbabwe Open University developed out of the University of Zimbabwe’s Centre for Distance Education created in 1993. The other six universities – Midlands State University, Bindura University of Science Education, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Great Zimbabwe University, Harare Institute of Technology and Lupane State University – were all formed after the year 2000, against the background of a severe economic recession in the country. The sizes of these institutions vary considerably in terms of the variety of academic programmes they offer and their student numbers, and in terms of infrastructure and physical plant. Some are operating from rented or borrowed premises, others from half-built campuses, while the University of Zimbabwe operates from a fully developed, but rapidly ageing and deteriorating campus.

The analysis in this section is drawn from a letter received by Piyushi Kotecha, CEO of SARUA, from Prof. Lindela Ndlovu, Chair of the Zimbabwe Vice-Chancellors’ Association, dated 26 December 2009.
Table 2: Basic Information on Zimbabwe’s Public Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Date of origin</th>
<th>Faculties</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Academic and research staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Agriculture, Arts, Commerce, Education, Engineering, Law, Science, Social Studies, Veterinary Medicine, Medicine</td>
<td>12 568 as at 2007</td>
<td>3 000 (entire staff complement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National University of Science Education</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Applied Sciences, Built Environment, Commerce, Communication &amp; Information Science, Industrial Technology, Medicine, Education, Law</td>
<td>4 781 as at 2007</td>
<td>182 as at 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe Open University</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Science, Social Sciences, Arts &amp; Education, Commerce &amp; Law</td>
<td>19 676 as at 2007</td>
<td>158 as at 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinhoyi University of Technology</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Science, Engineering &amp; Technology; Business, Management &amp; Law; Humanities &amp; Social Sciences; Institute of Lifelong Learning</td>
<td>2 807 as at 2008</td>
<td>163 as at 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bindura University of Science Education</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Science Education, Agriculture &amp; Environmental Science, Commerce</td>
<td>1 885 as at 2007 (estimate data)</td>
<td>179 as at 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harare Institute of Technology</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Engineering &amp; Technology, Industrial Sciences &amp; Technology, Business &amp; Management Sciences, Information Technology</td>
<td>268 as at 2008</td>
<td>70 as at 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lupane State University</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Agricultural Sciences, Humanities &amp; Social Sciences</td>
<td>81 as at 2008</td>
<td>16 as at 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Zimbabwe University</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Arts, Commerce, Education, Sciences</td>
<td>3 347 as at 2009</td>
<td>270 as at 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures above are based on the most recent information available from SARUA.\textsuperscript{54}
As evident from the Table 2 above, the majority of the universities are relatively new, having been established during the last decade. The institutions are generally at different stages of development, with the University of Zimbabwe being the only one that can be described as having reached full maturity status.  

While the higher education landscape reflects a deliberate attempt on the part of government to establish a niche focus for each of the newer universities, this strategy has unravelled in recent years with institutions engaging in concerted efforts to increase student enrolment by offering curricula across a range of disciplines in order to raise the funds necessary for cost-sharing.

With regards to the core functions of higher education, Zimbabwe’s universities have had a strong focus on teaching and learning (approximately 57% concentration), with research (approximately 28% concentration) and community service (approximately 15%).

**ZIMBABWE’S HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN RELATION TO THE SADC REGION**

This section presents a brief overview of the position of Zimbabwe’s higher education sector in relation to the rest of the region. The analysis is based on information obtained from a regional study conducted and published by SARUA (Butcher et al. in Kotecha 2008).

In 2008, Zimbabwe was one of the few SADC countries where public universities still outnumbered private universities (a total of nine public universities against four private universities). In addition, after South Africa, Zimbabwe had the second highest student enrolment rate in public universities in the region. However, with a female student enrolment rate of 37%, Zimbabwe compared less favourably with countries such as Namibia (58%), South Africa (52%), Botswana (51%), Mauritius (51%) and Swaziland (48%).

In terms of mode of delivery, Zimbabwe registered the second highest absolute number of distance students in the SADC region, after South Africa. Zimbabwe had 19 676 distance students against 32 777 contact students. For every distance student, Zimbabwe thus had almost two contact students. This ratio compared closely to the situation in South Africa and Swaziland.

In the fields of **science, engineering and technology** in the SADC region, excluding South Africa, Zimbabwe accounted for:

- 18% of total student enrolment in science, engineering and technology and almost 20% of the qualifications awarded
- 16% of undergraduate student enrolment in science, engineering and technology and almost 25% of the qualifications awarded

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55 Ibid.
56 Under the cost-sharing arrangement, government provides a portion of the funds required for operations and salaries, while the universities top up a portion of their funding requirements from student fees.
57 Butcher et al. in Kotecha (2008:77).
58 There was no comparative data on the number of private universities from Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, while Lesotho had no private university (Butcher et al. in Kotecha 2008:71).
59 Owing to South Africa’s dominance in higher education in the region, most of the comparisons made below exclude South Africa in order to gain a better sense of Zimbabwe’s higher education performance in relation to the other member states.
60 Zimbabwe ranked second after Mozambique in terms of the absolute number of students enrolled in science, engineering and technology as well as in absolute number of undergraduate students enrolled in science, engineering and technology within the SADC region.
9% enrolment at postgraduate level (postgraduate diplomas, master’s degrees and doctoral degrees) in science, engineering and technology and 2.5% of the qualifications awarded.61 This suggests that Zimbabwe had a considerable presence in the fields of science, engineering and technology, particularly at the undergraduate level, as demonstrated by the proportion of qualifications awarded vis-à-vis proportion of students enrolled. However, this was not the case at the postgraduate level, where a sharp decline in qualifications awarded was evident against equally low student enrolment. Clearly there is a relationship between the trend at postgraduate level and the crippling loss of senior academics and skilled researchers across the Zimbabwean higher education sector in the last decade.

In the fields of **business, management and law** in the SADC region, excluding South Africa, Zimbabwe accounted for:
- almost a quarter (24%) of total student enrolment, the second-highest ranking after Madagascar in terms of absolute numbers;
- 20% of the qualifications awarded in this discipline within the region;
- almost 20% of undergraduate student enrolment, the highest ranking in the region (excluding South Africa), and 19.5% of the qualifications awarded;
- 55% of total student enrolment at postgraduate level and almost 23% of the qualifications awarded. However, Zimbabwe had no doctoral students in business, management and law when the SARUA study was conducted in 2007.

In the **humanities and social sciences** in the SADC region, excluding South Africa, Zimbabwe accounted for:
- 18.5% of total student enrolment, the second-highest ranking after Madagascar in terms of absolute numbers, and 26.1% of the qualifications awarded;
- 11.5% of undergraduate student enrolment (ranking third after Mozambique and Angola in terms of absolute numbers) and 25% of the qualifications awarded;
- 20% of postgraduate student enrolment, the highest ranking in absolute numbers, and almost 23% of the qualifications awarded.

In **health sciences** in the SADC region, excluding South Africa, Zimbabwe accounted for:
- 13% of total student enrolment, ranking fourth after DRC, Tanzania and Madagascar;
- 13% of total undergraduate enrolment; and
- 14% at postgraduate enrolment.

(No data was available from Zimbabwe regarding other major fields of study, nor for qualifications awarded in health sciences and other major fields of study.)

These figures suggest that Zimbabwe higher education had a particularly strong regional presence in relation to science, engineering and technology, and business, management and law.

At 31% of the national budget allocated to higher education annually, Zimbabwe led in public allocation...
of funds to higher education in the SADC region (on the basis of data available in 2007). The SARUA study published in 2008 indicated that the Zimbabwean government subsidised up to 82.4% of higher education from the exchequer. However, at an informal meeting held with a group of senior university administrators from Zimbabwe in Johannesburg in March 2010, the researchers learnt that this figure may currently have fallen to 70%.

The SARUA study also suggests that there were virtually no foreign staff and foreign students at Zimbabwean universities. This may suggest a lack of appreciation for the quality of Zimbabwe education or the extent to which non-Zimbabweans perceive conditions in Zimbabwe to present an unconducive and disabling environment for scholarship.

**HIGHER EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE THE LAST DECADE – WHAT HAPPENED?**

As is evident from the analysis above, Zimbabwe's higher education sector used to be relatively well positioned in relation to higher education in the other SADC member states. As will be shown in the needs analysis in the next section, however, Zimbabwe's higher education sector today faces significant challenges that not only undermine the output of its institutions in core areas such as teaching and learning and research, but also threaten its very survival.

Zimbabwe's institutions of higher education are grappling with a massive exodus of senior academics with extensive teaching and research skill and experience. For instance, the University of Zimbabwe at one time employed well over 1,000 professors, but by 2007 only 627 faculty staff remained, leading to the closure of some departments. To compound the problem, due to the erosion by hyperinflation of the remuneration packages offered to academic staff, these institutions have failed to attract equally experienced lecturers and researchers as replacements for staff who have left their university posts.

Also, the public higher education institutions face ever-growing material deficiencies whilst student numbers continue to grow. The needs analysis below shows that physical facilities such as lecture halls and laboratories, libraries, student accommodation and the availability of ICT, among others, are in short supply. Universities such as Great Zimbabwe University and Lupane State University face the challenge that significant components of their physical infrastructure are yet to be built. According to the letter from Prof. Lindela Ndlovu to SARUA (December 2009), ‘many of our universities were started either at the beginning or in the middle of our economic meltdown so that they never acquired the requisite resources for teaching and learning, including well stocked libraries, or well developed Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), proper teaching equipment and suitably resourced and furnished laboratories.’ He notes that those institutions that were in good shape some ten years ago are now working with equipment and library stocks that are run down, antiquated and outdated.

While this unfortunate situation can be traced directly to the progressive economic meltdown witnessed over the last decade, in particular the hyperinflation that spiralled out of control from 2000, the underlying driver remains a difficult socio-political context. Having pegged financial assistance to visible economic and political transformation in the country, former and potential donors have adopted a wait and see attitude in relation to Zimbabwe. Without donor support, research in Zimbabwe higher
education institutions is severely constrained, both in respect of access to the latest scientific equipment and in keeping abreast of international scholarship trends and publications.

This notwithstanding, the Zimbabwean government retains a keen interest in the higher education sector. This is apparent from ongoing activity at both policy and regulation levels. For instance, the government has in the past few years instituted a number of policy reforms in the sector, the most prominent being the shift in emphasis from increasing access to improving the quality of education and training. The government has also put in place several statutory bodies to regulate various aspects of the higher education sector, key among these being the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education. This body is charged with the responsibility of assuring the quality of higher education in the country. Nevertheless, according to the ZUVCA letter to SARUA, calls from institutions for the replacement and renewal of equipment, libraries and facilities remain well beyond the reach of the cash-strapped Zimbabwe government. Without such investment, the government’s quality-assurance goals for higher education are likely to be stillborn.

Government interest in the higher education sector is further reflected through marginal increases, year on year, in the percentage of the national budget allocated to higher education. Despite a marked shift towards cost sharing, government subsidy still forms the bulk (82.4%) of funding available to higher education institutions, followed by student fees (12.4%) and others including donations and loans (5.7%). In 2002, a new student financing policy was put in place to broaden opportunities for tertiary education.

**NEEDS ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ZIMBABWE**

In response to the letter from the Zimbabwe Universities’ Vice-Chancellors Association to SARUA in December 2009, a rapid needs analysis of the Zimbabwe higher education sector was undertaken by SARUA in February 2010. The purpose was, firstly, to identify the key priorities of the public universities in Zimbabwe in the following five focus areas: teaching and learning, research, management, governance and planning, and infrastructure. Secondly, the needs analysis sought to highlight the scale or scope of existing deficiencies in the priority areas identified and to outline the nature of support required by these institutions to overcome the deficiencies.

A template was devised by SARUA and distributed to all nine public higher education institutions in Zimbabwe in February 2010. Responses were received from nine institutions following which further information was sought for clarification where necessary. The extent of detail provided in the data furnished by the institutions varied considerably. The analysis that follows is thus based on the information collected during the period 10 February–26 March 2010.

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65 Members of the Council for Higher Education board are appointed by the minister. According to the Ministry website, the current Minister for Higher and Tertiary Education is Dr Stanislaus I. G. Mudenge.
66 According to a group of senior administrators from Zimbabwe universities who met the researchers at an informal discussion held in Johannesburg in March 2010, this figure may currently be down to 70%.
68 Responses were received from Bindura University of Science Education, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Great Zimbabwe University, Harare Institute of Technology, Lupane State University, Midlands State University, National University of Science and Technology, the University of Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Open University.
The needs analysis that follows is intended to provide a basis for discussion about how regional co-operation could help revitalise Zimbabwe’s public higher education institutions.

**Teaching and learning**
In regard to teaching and learning, the universities identified the need for qualified academic and teaching staff as their number one priority. Human resource development, particularly staff development, is seen as essential, as are measures that will assist staff to become better qualified: lecturers need to complete their postgraduate qualifications and other academics require capacity-building support of varied kinds.

The data gathered through the needs analysis indicate that in the case of four universities (Midlands State University (MSU), Great Zimbabwe University (GZU), the National University of Science (NUST) and Technology, and Chinhoyi University of Technology) the complement of senior academics has been severely depleted. Between 42% (MSU) and 65% (Chinhoyi) of teaching posts are currently occupied by teaching assistants (junior lecturers), while NUST is experiencing a vacancy rate of some 45% in senior posts.

Suggested support strategies mentioned include scholarships and grants, subsidised postgraduate fees for staff, exchange programmes with other better-resourced institutions and mentorship of staff.

The second and third teaching and learning priorities revolve around the need for basic teaching equipment, better teaching facilities, better-resourced libraries (journals, e-journals and books), computers and access to the internet. Teaching and learning capacity is further eroded by the poor availability of library books (a current ratio of 20:1 at MSU as opposed to a desired ratio of 3:1). At Chinhoyi University inadequate student and staff:computer ratios further constrain the teaching and learning environment; the current lecturer:computer ratio at Chinhoyi University is 8:1 and the student:computer ratio is above 10:1.

The universities that focus on science and technology (GZU, NUST and Lupane State University (LSU)) also report significant shortages of scientific equipment for teaching and research purposes, particularly the need for access to laboratory equipment.

**Research**
In the case of research, the most common priority listed was the need for the Zimbabwe universities to secure research funding. The respondents indicate that in the absence of funding, very little research is currently being conducted. The second priority is for improved access to networking and collaborative academic activities. The third priority focuses on increasing research output through publications, journals and collaboration, and the institutions’ limited access to equipment and ICT.

At Midlands State University, two-thirds of lecturers lack research skills. The National University of Science and Technology submission indicates that only five professors and five associate professors are in place, pointing to the lack of capacity for research supervision and mentorship. Bindura University of Science Education currently focuses only on teaching because it has been unable to attract qualified staff due to low pay; it has very few staff with PhDs and has no professors to supervise research. Lupane State
University has been unable to fund research for the past two years and has requested the secondment of senior academics to mentor junior staff in research methodology.

With regard to research resources, the National University of Science and Technology is currently experiencing limited access to information because of poor internet access and power cuts. Bindura University of Science Education is constrained in its research capacity owing to shortages of equipment in chemistry and geography, and biological and environmental research.

The exodus of qualified academic staff heralds longer-term weaknesses for the research capacity of the institutions, which lack the experienced personnel to mentor and build the research capacity of junior staff and students. All the universities indicate the need to capacitate staff, particularly junior staff, through opportunities for academic development such as staff exchanges or drawing on senior academics and experts from other institutions. Research collaboration is also seen as a way of imparting skills to staff. The National University of Science and Technology has requested support for a database of senior academics in the region who can mentor researchers in their fields. The University of Zimbabwe has requested short-term visits by professors and researchers as well as staff exchanges to support staff development.

With regard to the need for regular attendance at conferences to keep abreast with recent developments and for purposes of networking, senior Zimbabwean university administrators attending a SARUA-sponsored Executive Management Development Programme in Johannesburg (March 2010), proposed holding such conferences in Zimbabwe to minimise costs and maximise local participation.

**Management**

The needs analysis indicates that in most cases the institutions’ management systems have been badly affected by the lack of funds. Management systems have broken down because of high vacancy levels among senior staff, which in turn are aggravated by the absence of benefits that staff previously enjoyed and which are no longer available. This points to the inextricable relationship between leadership and good management systems, and between the exodus of senior staff and the wider political and economic context of the country.

Three universities report high staff turnover at management level, and Lupane State University has in place less than a quarter of its full complement of top management staff. Midlands State University and Bindura University of Science Education report that there are no funds available for contract appointments in the event of staff taking sabbatical leave, thus affecting the conditions of service at these universities. Bindura University relies on student fees to sustain most operations. The respondents indicate that improved incentives and better working conditions are essential for attracting senior staff, filling vacant posts, and retaining senior staff.

The streamlining of management processes, including student information, is considered a second management priority. Various institutions identified a range of management issues as a third priority, with three universities reporting financial management and resource mobilisation as being critical.
Governance and planning

The universities surveyed, report that they all experience weaknesses in governance and planning. In some cases the newer higher education institutions have yet to develop and launch strategic plans, meaning that they lack guiding frameworks for goal definition, budgeting and setting targets. Linked to this are weak oversight mechanisms.

For example, Great Zimbabwe University (GZU) has identified the development of a strategic plan as a priority to guide its action plans, budgeting and target setting. Midlands State University identified the need for an effective administrative system, risk management and quality assurance. The National University of Science and Technology has only a quarter of its senior management structure in place and indicates that most members of the university council are not from a university background.

Some of the universities have made suggestions about the kind of support that could assist in improving governance and planning. Midlands State University suggests support in the form of expert guidance and secondment of staff to understudy experienced colleagues in regional institutions. The National University of Science and Technology similarly requests support and training of senior management staff (VC, PVC, bursar, registrar, and librarian). Zimbabwe Open University indicates that exposure to governance systems in other institutions would be helpful.

Making council members more aware of their governance role, was identified as an important area of focus by the National University of Science and Technology and by Lupane State University. This could facilitate better involvement of university council members in university affairs and could assist institutions to intercede with government.

Infrastructure

Given the current economic crisis in Zimbabwe, and the fact that some universities were established during the past decade which saw the escalation of the economic decline in the country, all the respondents identify the need for improvements in infrastructure. The top priorities are for teaching space (lecture rooms) and laboratory space. Two universities also identified the need for expansion or completion of their libraries as their key priority. Other infrastructural needs mentioned include administrative offices, staff and student accommodation, and sporting facilities.

Chinhoyi University of Technology has unequipped laboratories for the Agricultural Sciences, Engineering, Hospitality, and Creative Art and Design departments. The university’s hospitality department has two laboratories with obsolete equipment and the Creative Art and Design Department has a design laboratory with no computers. The university has one lecture theatre, 12 classrooms and one small library to accommodate 3 000 students. Three lecturers share one office, which is three by three metres in size.

The National University of Science and Technology has 75 lecture rooms – half the number of lecture rooms needed to accommodate 4 000 students. Great Zimbabwe University and Lupane State University operate from rented premises that are not adequate for their needs.
Midlands State University cites the adaption of infrastructure into adequate learning and research facilities as one of its biggest challenges. In nine years the student intake has increased from 400 to 8000 ‘based on the assumption that the government would fund infrastructural development to cater for increased population’ (MSU submission to SARUA needs analysis). It currently has seating capacity in its library for 500 students. The National University of Science and Technology has a library which is only 45% complete.

Four universities (Midlands State University, Great Zimbabwe University, Bindura University of Science Education and Lupane State University) identified staff and student accommodation as a priority. Midlands State University can only accommodate 1 100 students out of 8 000 students; Bindura University of Science Education similarly faces a critical housing shortage, which impacts on students who have to reside far away from the university.

Partnership experience in the Zimbabwe higher education sector

Most of Zimbabwe’s public universities have developed partnership programmes to varying degrees. For example, Great Zimbabwe University partnership programmes focus on seconding lecturers into GZU to teach courses at the university and to assist other learning institutions with training and programmatic work. The National University of Science and Technology has implemented an initiative whereby a donor has utilised the university’s resource base to undertake certain development initiatives in rural communities. In other cases student-centred public-private partnerships have produced scholarships from private organisations that target students across various faculties. Most public-private partnerships tend to be faculty-based and take a variety of forms, for example, organisations sponsoring programmes, libraries, computers and other equipment, and providing experts to lecture to students.

Compared to the other Zimbabwean public universities, Midlands State University seems to have a well-developed partnership programme, the benefits of which include access to resources such as library material. Through partnership arrangements with INASP and Book Aid International, Midlands State University has been able to significantly increase its access to books and electronic journals. However, the selection remains limited, meaning that the university needs to explore other alternatives to gain access to a wider range of material to meet its full demand. The university has also benefited from equipment and infrastructural support. Computer Aid International has provided computers to the university and this has produced a marked improvement in the student:computer ratio from 100:1 to 50:1. Mimosa Mining has assisted Midlands State University to access basic infrastructure such as boreholes, which has enabled the university to supplement its water requirements. Other areas in which this university has received support include the training of staff in research.

International donors have also provided some general support. For example, the regional UNESCO-HP funded project on ‘brain gain’ has enabled some universities, such as Chinhoyi University of Technology and Bindura University for Science Education, to access small research grants. However, this form of support remains relatively limited.

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69 International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications. INASP’s work focuses on communication, knowledge and networks, with particular emphasis on the needs of developing and emerging countries.
Collaborative research partnerships have assisted with improving research skills and exposing staff to research on a regional level. However, only a few universities were able to establish successful research collaborations. For example, Lupane State University is collaborating with both the International Centre for Development Oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA) and the University of Fort Hare in South Africa, on a project of Development and Partnership in Higher Education (DelPHE) sponsored by the British Council.

The Faculty of Natural Resources and Agriculture at Midlands State University has a research partnership on climate change (a DelPHE project), in place with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). This partnership has assisted Midlands to access research funds and has supported staff development as well as conference attendance. The Faculty of Social Sciences at Midlands State University has developed a research partnership with CODESRIA through which the faculty has benefitted from sponsored attendance at CODESRIA conferences and workshops. It has also received funding for local research seminars from this source.

According to senior Zimbabwean university administrators interviewed in Johannesburg in March 2010, there is some potential for partnerships between Zimbabwean universities and the Zimbabwe private sector. However, this would need to counter an established preference within the Zimbabwean private sector for contracting South African universities to undertake research. Partnerships between Zimbabwean universities and regional counterparts could help to build confidence within the Zimbabwean private sector to support scholarship and consultancy within Zimbabwe.

As is evident from the examples provided above, some universities in Zimbabwe have reported their ability to craft partnerships that have provided much-needed relief in the current environment. However, the partnership examples are relatively limited in scale and diversity. The information provided by the higher education institutions suggests that, given the prevailing tensions between powerful Western nations and the current regime in Zimbabwe, partnerships with international bodies in which these Western nations have significant influence are limited. There is relatively little evidence of partnerships between Zimbabwean public universities and other regional and international universities.

**OTHER INITIATIVES TAKEN TO STRENGTHEN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

**Strategies to improve financial circumstances**

Zimbabwean universities have undertaken a variety of initiatives to strengthen their financial circumstances, including raising student fees. A case in point is an attempt by the Great Zimbabwe University to increase student rates based on what it refers to as ‘realistic fees’. Given the general economic situation, however, this strategy was only partially successful because most students could not afford the increased fees. Furthermore the government has taken steps to cap fee increases, thereby limiting this revenue-generating strategy. Lupane State University reports that undergraduate fees are gazetted by government and remain far below the cost required to run the universities efficiently.

Also common is the practice of offering short courses that seek to address certain prevailing needs in the market.
Some of the more complex strategies adopted by universities include selling consultancy services or pursuing income-generating projects. For example, Bindura University of Science Education established a printing press and expanded its farm projects. Zimbabwe Open University opened an internet café with the assistance of a strategic partner in the private sector. However, the economic downturn has often led to companies withdrawing from such projects. Zimbabwe Open University is currently focussing on consultancy, research and poultry, piggery and hatchery projects.

As noted above, the establishment of partnerships with certain donors have produced revenue for purposes of funding specific needs.

**Strategies to ensure staff retention**
The universities in Zimbabwe have developed various strategies to stem the loss of academic staff. For instance, Great Zimbabwe University is using fees from students to supplement staff income. Bindura University of Science Education has attempted to secure residential stands from local authorities for its staff; it pays weekly incentives to cushion low salaries, upgrades teaching assistants to lecturers, offers shopping trips to South Africa and assists staff to procure laptops.

**Supporting research, teaching and learning**
Where there are shortages of senior academic staff, universities have drawn on people working in relevant industries and retired or part-time academics to teach certain courses. Midlands State University has embarked on staff development programmes and the training of teaching assistants. It has also hired retired and part-time academics to fill the research and teaching gaps. Although staff skills have improved, some programmes can still not be offered. The National University of Science and Technology placed staff in overseas and regional universities for masters and PhD training, but this was not successful as many participants did not return to take up their positions in Zimbabwe after they had completed their degrees. Cost-recovery efforts through the legal system proved to be prohibitive.

Universities continue to attempt to foster quality research through dedicated programmes or incentives to publish academic work. The National University of Science and Technology (NUST) established a Research and Innovation Office to foster a culture of research amongst its academic staff. The office has run courses on research proposal writing, research project management and research project writing. It has also invited external funders such as the British Council to present on their programmes and requirements for successful proposals. NUST reports an increased level of confidence amongst staff following these interventions, and an increase in applications for external grants (the results of the applications are still awaited). Research areas have also been streamlined into clusters of multidisciplinary teams that are in the process of answering requests for proposals in their respective areas of interest.

Other universities incentivise academic staff to publish their work. For example, Bindura University of Science Education has incentivised staff to publish work with a US$20 bonus per publication. In 2009 the university conducted a workshop on scientific article writing to equip staff with the writing skills necessary to publish their work. Given the environmental challenges that staff face, however (teaching loads, insufficient academic experience, poor facilities and inadequate equipment), the publications output remains limited. A second example is that of Midlands State University, which has increased its research output slightly through the establishment of local journals that provide avenues for academics
to publish their research. At present the journals are not fee-renewed journals, but this will be the case as from 2011. The Dyke journal caters for the arts and humanities. The Midlands State University Journal of Agriculture, Science and Technology caters for the natural sciences, agriculture and technology.

As noted above, Midlands State University and Lupane State University have both benefited from collaborative research partnerships crafted through international organisations and, in one case, with the University of Fort Hare in South Africa.

**Facilities and equipment**

The public universities in Zimbabwe have employed diverse strategies to bolster their access to equipment and facilities. These include making use of facilities and equipment located in other universities, research institutes or organisations; submitting proposals or requesting donor funding for infrastructure development support; or creating partnerships through which to access the relevant resources.

Current strategies to address shortages of equipment and facilities have included sending students for practical training to other institutions that have better facilities and equipment. For example, Bindura University of Science Education has an agreement with the Kutsaga Research Station, which has enabled it to access necessary basic equipment for research. However, access to advanced equipment is still a challenge.

The National University of Science and Technology continues to submit research proposals that request project funding, which includes the purchase of equipment. A limited number of research grants have been approved. NUST has also approached initiatives like the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons for equipment, but finds that it is competing with former Eastern Block countries in this regard.

Some universities have purchased books directly from publishers or have established relationships that provide access to electronic databases. The National University of Science and Technology has used UNESCO coupons to access books when foreign currency was not available.

Most universities have tried to negotiate for better access to the internet or are trying to set up wireless connectivity. Relationships with organisations such as Computer Aid International have been helpful in this regard.

**EMERGING INSIGHTS**

The rapid expansion of the higher education sector in Zimbabwe over the last decade was intended to increase access to higher education and to produce a landscape of specialised institutions, particularly in the fields of science and technology. Rapidly deteriorating economic circumstances undermined the second objective as the means of pursuing specialist academic excellence receded and many higher education institutions switched to survival mode. The political and economic conditions in Zimbabwe produced a situation in which most of the specialised institutions have been forced to diversify their offerings through a range of disciplines in order to bolster dwindling financial revenues. Going forward, it is possible that one strategic option for higher education reconstruction in Zimbabwe might
involve the consolidation of resources across institutions in order to regain the original intention of specialist excellence.

Given the massive loss of skilled professors, lecturers and senior researchers, higher education institutions in Zimbabwe witnessed the deterioration of teaching and learning facilities as well as compromised access to key ingredients of scholarship such as research material, books and ICTs. Accordingly, the quality of teaching and learning and the prospects for scholarship emerge as two critical success factors in revitalising Zimbabwe’s higher education sector. Co-operation from universities in other countries in the region could be focused on these two key issues in order to take initial steps to re-cultivate the culture of academic excellence that was once an integral part of Zimbabwe’s education system.

While it is apparent that the government of Zimbabwe retains a keen interest in the higher education sector, it is not clear how the state views the role of higher education in the country’s development and what level of support it envisages providing to the sector going forward. As noted above, all the universities surveyed indicate the need for capacity development as a top priority arising from the necessity to fill vacant academic positions resulting from the ongoing brain drain within Zimbabwe’s higher education sector. Generally, senior academic staff and experienced researchers opt to immigrate in search of more financially rewarding opportunities. For some time now, academics in Zimbabwe have earned a flat rate monthly salary of US$100, pegged by government for all public servants. However, following ongoing dialogue between government and the universities, this was recently improved and salaries have been rescaled to factor in seniority levels. Professors currently earn US$800 monthly, while lecturers and general workers earn US$600 and US$200 respectively. However, this still pales into insignificance when compared with the regional average of US$2000 for lecturers.

The dire financial circumstances that continue to bedevil the Zimbabwean economy as a whole and the higher education sector in particular mean that while universities perpetually churn out more and more qualified staff to foreign markets, they are unable to compete on an equal footing with their regional peers for qualified replacement staff or skilled researchers who in any event are in scarce supply in the region as a whole.

Informal discussion with senior university administrators from Zimbabwe suggests that their preferred retention strategy would be for donor support to top up staff salaries. From the donor perspective, however, the question is how to measure the return on such investment. Donors are unlikely to make funds available without these being tied to clear outputs, and would in this case be shoring up public sector expenditure in a conflicted political environment.

While it currently seems virtually impossible to plug the exodus of Zimbabwe’s academic staff, genuine multi-stakeholder engagement (from regional governments, the Zimbabwean government, donors, civil society and regional organisations such as SARUA) may produce some short-term measures that could slow down the rate of attrition by strengthening institutional retention strategies. Although the crisis facing Zimbabwe’s higher education sector is closely linked to the country’s wider socio-political context,

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70 This information was shared with the research team by senior administrators from Zimbabwe universities during an informal discussion held in Johannesburg in March 2010 in the course of their attending a SARUA Executive Management Development Programme.
initiatives undertaken to support and transform the fortunes of higher education institutions in the short term could in turn lay important foundations for fast-tracking the rebuilding of higher education quality and systems once the political contestation in the country is resolved.

Through ZUVCA, Zimbabwe’s higher education leaders have called for a ‘Marshall Plan’ to ‘resuscitate or revive higher education in Zimbabwe’ (Ndlovu, 2009). Clearly this would have to be developed within Zimbabwe, once the political impasse has been resolved, in order to lay the basis for the fundamental reconstruction of public higher education in Zimbabwe.

Internal and external funding flows are critical to the rebuilding of higher education in Zimbabwe. The flow of external funding, however, is likely to depend on two factors:

- evidence of what the reconstruction plan looks like, with clear subcomponents and concrete outputs in each case; and
- a political resolution within the country.

The needs analysis presented in this paper can serve as a springboard for productive discussion at regional level around how arrangements and projects could be crafted to support Zimbabwe academics, researchers and institutional leaders to begin the process of revitalising a once-proud higher education sector.
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CONSIDERATIONS FROM INSIDE ZIMBABWE REGARDING THE REBUILDING OF ITS HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM—

CHRISTOPHER CHETSANGA

ABSTRACT
The remarkable progress that Zimbabwe had made in expanding its higher education system since its independence in 1980 (from one university in 1980 to 13 universities today) has been upset by the international response to its unconventional land reform measures implemented in 2000. The international community, in sympathy with the white farmers who lost their farms, imposed economic sanctions on Zimbabwe. This led to an economic meltdown and an inflationary spiral that forced many business enterprises to either reduce or to suspend their economic activities. Both public and private sectors lost the capacity to provide reasonable remuneration packages to their employees. A UNESCO-funded study of 2009 found that many enterprises including university institutions were now engaged in suboptimal operations. A large component of professionals including university lecturers had been forced by the unbearable economic environment to go into the diaspora. South African universities had become the major Zimbabwe diasporan lecturer (ZDL) destination. Huge lecturer vacancy rates have developed in Zimbabwe State universities, especially in their sciences-related departments. The Zimbabwe Council on Higher Education (ZIMCHE), responsible for Zimbabwe’s university quality assurance, is concerned about the effect that the high lecturer vacancy rate will have on the quality of the country’s degrees. The ZIMCHE Chairman and Vice Chancellors of Zimbabwe State universities used the SARUA Leadership Dialogue Event to request the Vice Chancellors of South African universities, as the employers of the ZDLs, to allow those ZDLs willing to make brief visits to Zimbabwe universities to provide the needed lecturing services. The Zimbabwean team was extremely grateful to be assured by the Vice Chancellors of South African Universities, employing these ZDLs, that they were sympathetic.

Christopher Chetsanga is Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education and President of the Zimbabwe Academy of Sciences.
to the Zimbabwe university lecturer shortages and would release the willing ZDLs to provide lecturing services in Zimbabwe universities during their periods of free time.

**INTRODUCTION**

On behalf of the Zimbabwe Council on Higher Education (ZIMCHE), I would like to thank SARUA for organising this Dialogue. We, in ZIMCHE and the Zimbabwe Vice Chancellors are greatly encouraged to understand that SARUA is interested in dialogue concerning the rebuilding of Zimbabwe’s higher education system.

For ZIMCHE, this meeting is one of the timeliest events relating to addressing the critical shortage of lecturers in higher education in Zimbabwe. It should be pointed out that the highest priority assignment to ZIMCHE, by the Zimbabwe Government, is to oversee the maintenance of the quality of higher education in Zimbabwe. It is from this perspective that we welcome the opportunity offered by this Dialogue on discussing strategies for rebuilding higher education in Zimbabwe.

It can never be over-emphasised that the greatest asset that a nation has is its human resource capital. From a developmental perspective, a country’s human asset assumes an even greater proportion when it amasses a greater skills capacity.

**EARLIER STRIDES IN ZIMBABWE HIGHER EDUCATION**

Following its independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has been making great strides in developing its human capital. A system of universal access to education raised Zimbabwe’s literacy rate to over 91.2%, which according to the UN Development Programme Report 2009 is the highest in Africa. A credible system of expanding higher education led to the increase in the number of universities from one in 1980 to the present 13 (nine State and four private) universities. There are three additional new State universities ready to be launched. It is ZIMCHE that has provided the intellectual leadership for these developments while Government has provided the policy environment.

Developmental measures were smoothly taking shape at a rate that could have enabled Zimbabwe to meet the UN set deadline of some of the millennium development goals (MDGs). Then certain policy interventions in the agricultural sector in 2000 brought in an international reaction that upset the apple cart.

**ONSET OF ECONOMIC DECLINE**

The gains that had been earlier scored were disrupted by the economic demise that beset the economy starting in 2000. The economic downturn, coupled to the burgeoning inflationary spiral, progressively reduced the capacity of critical segments of Zimbabwe employers to provide reasonable remuneration packages to their employees, who included the bulk of the country’s skilled manpower. The unattractive salary and inflation levels reached extreme heights in 2008, culminating in the introduction of today’s multiple currency system in the Zimbabwe economy in February 2009. This economic meltdown became a push factor that drove a disruptive proportion of the country’s skilled manpower into the diaspora. It

is now estimated that 30% of the Zimbabwe population is in the diaspora. The pull factors presented by the diasporan destinations are their livelier economic strengths which make them capable of paying better remuneration packages than the Zimbabwe establishments can.

**UNESCO COMMISSIONED INVESTIGATION**

The Zimbabwe Academy of Sciences (ZAS) recently completed (October 2009) a UNESCO-commissioned study directed at assessing the current status of science, technology and innovation (STI) in Zimbabwe. The three-month study sought to determine the strengths, gaps and weaknesses of such key STI areas as the life sciences, engineering sciences and industry, information communication technology and environmental sciences. The study analysed the manpower component (skills contents, vacancy rates), infrastructure (space, equipment adequacy and quality) and levels of current productivity of business enterprises and institutions.

The study established that unbearably high vacancy rates had occurred in the health and education sectors, the engineering and mining sectors, the financial and business sectors, the information communications and electronic sectors, and the agricultural sciences sector. In universities, the vacancy rates varied with the departmental area, being worst in the Engineering and Sciences areas. The vacancy rates in the Arts and Humanities departments, even though affected, were generally lower than those in the Sciences.

These manpower losses were very unfortunate because these universities had earlier invested considerable financial resources in lecturer training. Addressing the existing staff shortages is going to require either more funding spent on training new lecturers, or finding ways of attracting back the former lecturers who were lost to the diaspora.

The vacancy situation in industrial and other business enterprises was found to be similar in trend and comparable in intensity. The overall economic impact was a reduction in productivity (by as much as 80%) forcing many companies to either suspend or to reduce production. In the financial sector, the study found that most banks had sent part of their staff on management leave, hoping to re-call them when the market environment improves.

**IMPACT OF THE BRAIN DRAIN**

In terms of the STI active experts, the study found that most of the critical staff had succumbed to the brain drain. In addition to the poor remuneration being a push factor, the drying up of funding to support S&T research was another push factor. A lot of equipment was found lying idle, in need of repair and servicing. The students doing research for their MSc and PhD degrees were being negatively affected.

The flight of significant proportions of STI manpower out of Zimbabwe has meant that the leftover scientific and engineering expertise ranks are not enough to offer sufficient technical support required by industry and the manufacturing sector enterprises. The economic recovery that all Zimbabweans are clamouring for is thus not yet adequately stimulated. The low national liquidity environment is the major barrier to economic recovery.
CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN UNIVERSITIES

The flight of expertise has badly affected university lectureship ranks, especially in the science-related departments. It is crucial that measures are taken to re-staff the country’s universities. Resources permitting, the fastest way to restore university staffing in Zimbabwe is to bring back the diasporan former lecturers. The current slow rate of the recovery of Zimbabwe’s economy is going to make it next to impossible for the nine state universities to raise the additional funding required for improving the salaries for their lecturers - the only measure for attracting back the lecturers now in the diaspora.

The alternative is to re-engage in large-scale staff development programmes whose funding is unfortunately not available to the affected universities. This process will take 4-6 years before registering an effect on current lecturing vacancies. In the meanwhile, a number of departments are being forced by circumstances to fill some lecturer posts with under-qualified personnel.

STRENGTHENING ZIMBABWE’S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

To enjoy a stable expertise base, the country’s universities must be provided with a well-trained and reasonably remunerated lecturing staff, so as to ensure that they will resist the pull forces of the diaspora. Their teaching as well as the R & D activities must be appropriately funded so as to enable them to effectively impart knowledge and skills to their trainees, in addition to pursuing satisfactory R & D work in support of their professional development and the needs of industry.

Knowledge is an unexcelled weapon for development. Knowledge enables mankind to effectively exploit planet earth’s resources in a more sophisticated and sustainable way. The provision of competitive remuneration packages, properly maintained research facilities and adequate research funding levels, will enable Zimbabwe to attract back the skills that it has lost to the diaspora.

DIAPO IRA EXCURSIONS ARE GLOBAL

It is now widely admitted that diasporan excursions, as a global entity, are here to stay. In 2007, the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC) presented a petition to the G8, appealing to them to discourage the flight of African professionals to their countries. The request was turned down. A number of G8 member states indicated that they need foreign labour imports as they were facing labour shortages, because the populations in their countries were increasingly made up more of retired and ageing populations than of working-age populations.

It is thus clear that there are a number of diasporan destinations that will continue to actively recruit African skilled manpower. In fairness to our diasporan professionals, it must be acknowledged that many of them leave their home countries due to either a failure to get jobs or to the failure of their home country in providing the facilities and the funding that are necessary for promoting their professional development. Thus the diasporan destination pull factor is not always the issue of better salaries.

All these factors, point to the need for African countries to offer their professionals competitive remuneration packages, well-equipped working infrastructures and the necessary research-funding support. It is these shortcomings that have driven the university lecturers from Zimbabwe into the diaspora, not shortages of employment opportunities.
DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE NETWORK STRATEGY

It has been proposed at a number of recent fora, that systems be instituted in Zimbabwe to facilitate the establishment of knowledge networks between Zimbabwe universities and their relevant diasporans. Such knowledge networks can provide opportunities for diasporan Zimbabweans with appropriate academic qualifications to contribute manpower solutions to address the high vacancy rates in many departments at Zimbabwe’s universities.

Knowledge networks have been creatively used in jointly deploying advanced information and distributed computing technologies. The use of advanced distributed computing and communication technologies in knowledge networks can accelerate a country’s progress towards building a knowledge-based society. On 10 September 2009, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, in partnership with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), launched a Zimbabwe Human Capital Website. The website will provide a platform for universities and other Zimbabwe entities to communicate with our diasporans.

The website can also provide platforms for knowledge-network dialogues whereby diasporans can assist local S&T manpower in accessing advanced technological knowledge from leading countries in global technology. Those pursuing academic careers abroad could be encouraged to make frequent lecturing visits to Zimbabwe, so that they can assist in relieving the lecturer shortages at our national universities. The knowledge transmittance by diasporan Zimbabweans can thus be facilitated. In this way, the country will benefit from knowledge transmittance by its diasporans in the same way that it is currently benefitting from the money transmittance by the diasporans.

ZIMCHE REQUEST TO SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

On behalf of the Vice Chancellors of the nine State Universities in Zimbabwe, ZIMCHE has a special request to make to the Vice Chancellors of the South African universities where Zimbabwean diasporan lecturers are currently employed. ZIMCHE requests the administrative authorities of these South African universities to allow those Zimbabwean diasporan lecturers, who are willing to use their spare time, to come to Zimbabwe to provide lecturing services to needy departments of identified Zimbabwean universities. Non-Zimbabwean lecturers willing to provide this service would also be welcome.

The period of time for such lecturing services could be between two and six weeks. We ask our South African partner universities to pay such volunteers their normal monthly salaries. ZIMCHE will arrange for donor assistance in funding the costs of transportation and living expenses incurred by each volunteering lecturer.

ZIMCHE requests each South African university, willing to offer this assistance, to provide the names and lecturing specialty areas of volunteering lecturers on their staff. It is hoped that the volunteering diasporan would continue to receive their monthly salary from their South African university employer. This friendly request is made in the spirit that the brief Zimbabwe posting of the volunteering lecturers does not interfere with employment contracts in the respective South African universities. ZIMCHE and the Ministry of Higher Education have secured funding to cover the transportation and living costs for the diasporan lecturers willing to provide the needed lecturing services in Zimbabwe State Universities.
CONCLUSION

ZIMCHE is urging the Government of Zimbabwe to design a policy strategy to fully exploit the joint expertise offered by the country’s local and diasporan STI capability, and to create a national environment in which industrial and business enterprises attain greater economic competitiveness. The resultant strengthening of the economy will provide the needed financial resources for restoring robustness and stability to its higher education system.

There should be a forward-looking national policy that encourages diasporan Zimbabweans to play active roles in national development. This should include special measures that encourage them to invest in business enterprises in Zimbabwe. These measures would strengthen the country’s ability to offer reasonable levels of funding for its universities.

Diasporan Zimbabweans should be allowed to retain their Zimbabwe citizenship, even if their current host country grants them a citizenship status. Zimbabwe should also grant them rights to submit absentee voting ballots during national elections. Appropriate arrangements can be made for absentee ballot casting at embassies abroad. All these provisions will inspire our diasporan sons and daughters to be fully motivated to work hard in promoting the prosperity of Zimbabwe in all spheres.
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LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE ON REBUILDING HIGHER EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE: PRIORITIES AND PROSPECTS

– MARK BURKE

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a report on the leadership dialogue process facilitated by the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) on the theme, Rebuilding Higher Education in Zimbabwe: Implications for Regional Collaboration. The leadership dialogue was organised by SARUA in response to a request, by the Zimbabwe Universities’ Vice Chancellors Association (ZUVCA), for the convening of a forum to discuss the formulation of an ‘operational blueprint’ for revitalising the higher education sector in Zimbabwe.

The request by the leadership of the higher education sector in Zimbabwe was made against the backdrop of a declining macro-economic environment which has adversely impacted on the ability of the higher education sector in the country to reproduce and sustain itself. The adverse consequences include the departure of high numbers of academic staff, and a significant number of academics training in institutions outside the country opting not to return. The impact of the brain drain is further exacerbated by poor conditions of service so that universities are unable to attract and retain appropriately qualified staff. In addition, teaching and research take place in an operating environment characterised by inadequate support resources such as libraries, laboratories, laboratory equipment, access to computers and space.

SARUA, as a regional membership organisation mandated to assist in the revitalisation and development of the leadership and institutions of higher education in Southern Africa, responded to the request by inviting Vice Chancellors from higher education institutions in the region. The leadership dialogue was designed as a highly focused conversation to encourage co-operation from within the region, and to explore the possibilities and potential for regional collaboration. The dialogue was organised to advance two of SARUAs five strategic goals, that is, (1) to develop a regional higher education identity that is

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representative of the diversity of the region; and (2) to convene strategic fora to enhance collaboration, linkages and partnership across the sector.

This paper situates the process and outcome of the leadership dialogue at the intersection of three important perspectives that frame the approach SARUA has adopted in its efforts to develop leadership capacity in the higher education sector in Southern Africa. It traces the unfolding of the dialogue from the initial divergent starting points, to the emergence of common themes that informed and cultivated the eventual outcomes of the process.

**PERSPECTIVES**

The design of the dialogue process was informed and framed by three important conceptual perspectives, namely, the development of a regional higher education identity, SARUA’s specific approach to dialogue and its focus on managing the interaction with its constituents on a network basis.

**Regional Higher Education Identity Perspective**

Diversity is a key feature of higher education and higher education institutions in the Southern African region. These diversities include:

- **Systemic diversity** from the perspective of the different types of institutions and how they are managed;
- **Structural diversity** in terms of their peculiar historical, colonial and legal foundations;
- **Programmatic diversity** since these institutions provide a broad range of educational outcomes;
- **Procedural diversity** insofar as the ways in which curricula are delivered and research is undertaken; and
- **Cultural diversity**.

Forging a regional higher education identity that is premised on diversity as a key strength is a major outcome SARUA seeks to achieve over the next several years. Hence, the notion of a regional higher education identity has been conceptualised as comprising three constituent elements. These constituent elements relate to the **Profile** of higher education institutions in the region, its systemic **Priorities** and the **Performance** of institutions on a regional scale. Thus the profile of higher education in the region determines its priorities, which in turn impact on its performance.

The character of the regional higher education **Profile** is informed by several factors, which include the historical evolution of higher education systems of countries in the region; the policy frameworks governing higher education; the areas of focus of institutions in the region; enrolment patterns; the nature and standards of qualifications awarded; the capacities available to these institutions; funding frameworks and investment in higher education; and quality assurance systems and measures.

The profile forms the basis for defining the development needs and trajectory of higher education in the region.

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The regional higher education Priorities for development are in turn shaped and influenced by the needs of institutions as a collective in the region. A systemic approach has been developed to identify the needs and prioritise the interventions which are likely to make the most significant impact on revitalising higher education in the region. Prioritisation is important in view of the limited resources available for investment in developing the capacity of the higher education sector in the region. A long list of possible areas for intervention have been clustered and prioritised into twenty major leadership challenges for higher education in Southern Africa.⁷⁶

The priority interventions are aimed at improving the Performance outcomes of higher education institutions in the region. Performance in this instance is measured in terms of how well higher education institutions carry out their core missions of teaching, research and civic engagement. It is widely acknowledged that higher education institutions in the region have performed poorly on a number of measures including the quality of graduates produced in the region, their research productivity, and their ability to impact more significantly on development in the region.⁷⁷

It is assumed that changes in the character of the regional higher education identity, that will shift its development trajectory from decline into entering a positive reinforcing cycle of improved performance, are dependent on significant investment in effort and time.

**Dialogical Perspective**

SARUA's approach to dialogue is framed by the understanding that the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts, rather than a way of thinking premised on Newtonian mechanics in which any phenomenon can be reduced to its parts as the route to specifying its nature, and predicting and controlling the whole phenomenon. This emerging worldview, informed by the complexity sciences such as complex systems theory, chaos theory, general systems theory and ecosystem studies, emphasises holistic ways of understanding phenomena in which the interaction between constituent parts produces the emergent patterns or properties of a given phenomenon.⁷⁸ Thus, ‘[c]omplexity represents social systems behavior of which the dynamic synergy of both individual autonomy and social responsibility can produce adaptive emergent behaviors.’⁷⁹

The complexity in the range of problems faced in society in general, and in the higher education sector in particular, is such that no one institution, group or constituency has the authority, resources and imagination to respond to it effectively. Thus, in organising the leadership of the higher education sector in Southern Africa around a shared vision, and in providing a platform for interaction, SARUA encourages the production of adaptive emergent leadership responses to the problems in the sector. Dialogue in this context is a form of communication that makes possible ‘a sustained collective inquiry into the processes, assumptions, and certainties’⁸⁰ that comprise the experience of the higher education leadership of the region. It is the discipline of collective thinking and inquiry, a process of transforming the quality of conversation and, in particular, the thinking that lies beneath it.⁸¹

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Contrasting dialogue with other forms of communication and interaction is a useful way of understanding SARUA’s approach to facilitating conversation among the higher education leadership of the region.

Dialogue is distinct in character from debate. Dialogue is collaborative in the search for shared understanding, rather than combative in the way that debate seeks to prove the other side wrong; dialogue seeks to uncover assumptions for re-evaluation, whereas debate focuses on defending assumptions as truth; dialogue searches for strength and value in other positions, as opposed to the way debate seeks out the weakness in the other positions; and dialogue moves from the premise that many people have parts of the answer, while there is only one right answer in debate.\textsuperscript{82}

Dialogue is different from negotiation. Negotiation is a common method of allocating resources in an environment dominated by competition and conflict, and in which settlement of conflict is based on a clash of interests, driven by an agenda and funnelled towards an outcome. Dialogue, on the other hand, focuses on revealing shared long-term interests as the basis for creating shared meaning.\textsuperscript{83}

Dialogue stands apart from consensus building. In consensus building, a rational means to limit options is sought as a basis for focusing on the options that are acceptable to most people. The fundamental patterns of disagreement are not altered as people are prepared to live with a specific outcome. Dialogue, rather, seeks to have people learn how to think together in a way that surfaces fundamental assumptions and gaining insights.\textsuperscript{84}

Dialogue, then, as a form of communication and interaction, provides the higher education leadership with the opportunity to think and imagine together, informing co-ordinated action.

**Network Perspective**

New forms of governing and governance in society have emerged over the last few decades. The complexity of policy processes, the multitude of actors involved in policy making and implementation, and questions about the legitimacy of government have reduced government to only one of many actors.\textsuperscript{85} Hence, governing, or ‘the means to influence, shape, regulate or determine outcomes’, is no longer the ‘exclusive preserve of government’ since there are many agencies and institutions involved in governing social order.\textsuperscript{86}

The limits of large-scale rational planning and hierarchical regulation as the dominant mode of governing and collective problem solving have increasingly come to the fore in the postmodern context in which societal problems are so complex and contested. The classical approach, on which public and business administration have been premised for the last century, has mostly had an intra-organisational focus incorporating hierarchies with strict chains of command. In contrast, network settings are not based on central authority and cannot be subjected to the logic of a single organisational goal.\textsuperscript{87}

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Rather, the network approach recognises that policy formulation and implementation are inevitably the result of interaction among a plurality of separate actors with separate interests, goals and strategies. The network perspective emphasises interdependence, which stems from the distribution of resources across many actors, the goals the various actors pursue, and their resource dependencies. The interaction among actors ensures that information, resources and goals are exchanged. Furthermore, from this perspective it is clear that organisations need to adjust their own strategies in some way to match those of other organisations in the network if they are to attain their goals. It is frequent and repeated interaction that gives rise to stable patterns of social relations and the rules which govern these, as the basic constituent elements of policy and implementation networks.

In a network setting the primary activities are: selecting the appropriate actors and resources, shaping the operating context of the network, and developing ways to cope with strategic and operational complexity. This involves arranging, stabilising as much as possible, nurturing, and integrating the network structure. Hence, network steering processes consist of activating networks to tackle particular problems or issues (network activation); establishing ad-hoc organisational arrangements to support interaction (arranging); bringing together solutions, problems and actors (brokerage); promoting favourable conditions for joint action (facilitation); and conflict management (mediation).

This approach lends itself to ‘collective, pragmatic, participatory, local problem solving in recognition that many problems are simply too complicated, too contested and too unstable to allow for centralised regulation.

**FROM DIALOGUE TO INITIATIVE**

Three phases could be observed as the Zimbabwe universities dialogue process unfolded. The dialogue moved from participants articulating their specific interest, shifted to the emergence of common themes, and ultimately moved towards new insights and understandings which formed the basis for the proposed action at the end of the conversation. These phases are not linear, but rather iterative in resembling the flow of continuity and change inherent in conversation and human interaction.

**Interests**

Three relatively distinct arenas of interest associated with the three major categories of participants in the dialogue process were observed during the preparatory process and at the start of the dialogue. The observed interests were those expressed by the Zimbabwe Universities’ Vice Chancellors Association (ZUWCA), SARUA and individual leaders of sister institutions participating in the dialogue.

The Zimbabwe Universities’ Vice Chancellors Association (ZUWCA) was unequivocal in articulating their interest in the SARUA-facilitated dialogue. The ZUWCA interest was to ensure that the dialogue led to the formulation of an ‘operational blueprint’ for resuscitating higher education in Zimbabwe.

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It was expected that such a plan should address and put in place a programme for upgrading the qualifications of teaching assistance to a Master's level qualification; raise the quality of research by providing mentorship and supervision to young staff and promoting collaborative research projects; and instituting exchange programmes for students and staff.

SARUA's interest in facilitating this dialogue was governed by its strategic agenda of developing a regional higher education identity, enhancing regional collaboration, building leadership capacity, and promoting an enabling higher education policy environment in the region. This strategic agenda intersected with the request for assistance from ZUVCA in two fundamental ways. Firstly, it is SARUA's contention that strong higher education institutions at a national level are required to build a regional higher education identity. Secondly, it provided an opportunity to strengthen co-operation among higher education institutions in the region.

The dialogue event was thus constructed around SARUA's interest to respond to the call for assistance by exploring opportunities that could be created within a short- to medium-term time frame, notwithstanding the fact that higher education is a national responsibility. It was constructed as a leadership to leadership conversation between higher education institutions from Zimbabwe and sister institutions from the region that combined insider and outsider perspectives. In addition, SARUA approached the dialogue as a part of a possible process of empowering Zimbabwean higher education institutions for a future dialogue with the state.

The individual participating higher education institutions expressed an interest in understanding the current context and needs of higher education institutions in Zimbabwe, while at the same time expressing the need to understand, through this process, how each could make a contribution to revitalising the sector. Individual institutions were also concerned with the possible obligations this process might impose on their institutions. Nevertheless, there was a willingness expressed by all participating institutions to explore how this initiative could serve as an example of solidarity in the higher education sector articulated on a regional scale.

Although the three major stakeholder groupings participating in the workshop had divergent starting points, there was sufficient common ground and commitment to finding a mutually rewarding outcome. The point of convergence among all three was the ambition of developing a regional higher education identity through a collaborative process. For instance, ZUVCA was of the view that the task of revitalising higher education in Zimbabwe 'provided an opportunity for individual institutions to work towards becoming a resourceful and formidable block with a unity of purpose.'

Incipient Themes

Several themes emerged during the course of the dialogue, which aided and framed the eventual birth of the actions proposed by participants. These incipient thematic areas included: (1) a greater understanding of how the state impacts on the development of the higher education sector; (2) South-South co-operation; and (3) the nature of the intervention.

The Role of the State
The role of the state was acknowledged as a critical ingredient to the successful revitalisation of the higher education system in Zimbabwe. The recent decline of the higher education system, as well as its potential revitalisation, was a matter for considerable discussion. Initially delegates expressed reservations about the feasibility of exploring the rebuilding of higher education in Zimbabwe without the government, and insisted that any discussions on this question should be held in the context of a national plan for rebuilding the system. The view shifted out of focus in the context of viewpoints that emphasised the importance of taking responsibility and demonstrating leadership on questions impacting higher education in the region. As such, the dialogue session was regarded as part of a preparatory process necessary for meaningfully engaging with government.

South-South Co-operation
The important frame for this dialogue meeting was that the Zimbabwean higher education sector turned to the higher education fraternity in the region for assistance, rather than the predominant approach of looking to institutions in the North. The basis for seeking co-operation from institutions in the region is a strongly-shared history and shared future. In setting the context for the discussion, the Chairperson of SARUA welcomed all the participants with reference to a Setswana saying which means ‘when your neighbour’s house is on fire, you put aside your differences in case the fire spreads to your property.’ From this point of view, the future of the higher education sector in Zimbabwe is important to the SADC and the future of SADC is critical to the needs of all the institutions in the region. The possibility that ‘this might be the first real action process of solidarity in higher education on a regional scale that could help think through similar interventions that may arise across southern Africa,’ served to motivate delegates to ‘get this right if we are to succeed in a difficult situation.’

Nature of the intervention
Again, the conversations about the nature of the assistance and intervention requested by ZUVCA were not immediately clear at the outset of the dialogue. Initially there were very different understandings about what possible support was needed and what could be provided. This was against a backdrop of experience elsewhere that suggests that ‘reconstruction and revitalisation of higher education systems across African tend to be chaotic, episodic and incomplete.’

It was clear, though, that any assistance provided has to operate at various levels, given the complexity of higher education systems at a national level. Discussions on interventions at the macro level focused on the need to prepare for a dialogue with the state so that the higher education sector in Zimbabwe would be prepared to engage meaningfully when the opportunity arose. Furthermore, the discussions emphasised the need to promote confidence in the potential contribution of the higher education sector to the national reconstruction project in Zimbabwe.

At the meso level, the decline in the sector has provided an opportunity for institutions to ‘rethink their missions,’ followed by a complete revamping of university administrative and management systems. The deployment of new technologies was also identified as a ‘low hanging fruit’ that should be harvested in the revitalisation process.
The necessity for building capacity beyond the current crop of academics who provide stability in the system, towards a state in which the system is able to reproduce itself, was identified as critical at the micro level. Different tactical approaches were explored in respect of staff development. On the one hand, it was deemed more cost-effective to recruit junior staff and grow the universities’ staff resources. On the other hand, it was argued that the urgency of the matter required immediate action and, therefore, the option of recruiting experienced academics in Southern Africa and more broadly the Diaspora is a more viable one.

**Initiatives and Insights**

A release of creative energy was witnessed during the latter parts of the dialogue session when the initial and perceived constraints to providing assistance to Zimbabwean higher education institutions dissipated. Several ideas and suggestions surfaced, each building on top of earlier ones, layering and firming up the series of proposals which led to the formulation of The Cape Town Accord.

Perhaps the question that most adequately captures the shift in the conversation, away from constraints and towards possibilities for providing assistance, was the question of whether this situation in Zimbabwe and the call for assistance to the higher education leadership of the region could represent ‘an opportunity to rethink the role of the university in an African context.’ Although the sentiment expressed in this ambition may have been beyond the scope of the dialogue, it nevertheless reflected the tipping point in the conversation.

The first practical proposal made in regard to the development of a series of interventions was that the interventions should be defined by a set of criteria. The first criterion rests on whether the available capacity exists to implement a specific intervention. The second criterion is that the intervention should be mutually beneficial for participating universities. The final criterion involves an assessment of the degree of innovation embedded in the proposed intervention.

Further conversation led to discussions on specific purposes and the means by which to achieve the identified purposes. It was proposed that the purposes for which interventions need to be developed include higher education system renewal, institutional renewal and the renewal of intellectual priorities with specific reference to particular fields of study. The means by which these purposes are to be achieved include policy research projects to determine what types of policies would promote regional renewal, methods for resource exchange to drive institutional renewal, the identification of a small number of nodal points for intellectual renewal.

At a practical level, a number of proposals were made for consideration:

- A more organised recruitment strategy form Zimbabwean universities to Zimbabwean graduates based, especially in South African institutions, could be considered.
- Staff from universities in the region could be made available to take up short-term teaching assignments in Zimbabwean universities. Care should be taken, however, not to second staff who are already overworked and overstretched unless it is appropriately funded. It would also be important to gain the co-operation of heads of schools and deans, without whose support such an initiative is unlikely to have any meaningful impact.
Greater use should be made of technology, for instance, to enable remote lecturing, video conferencing or live or asynchronous transmission of lectures.

A few important insights were gained in the ensuing conversation. It is important to develop steering capability that will co-ordinate the various efforts underway. Such a steering capability was identified as important for ensuring that the Zimbabwean higher education leadership remains the driving force of the agenda for rebuilding the sector. The roles and responsibilities of individual institutions, national bodies and regional organisations would also have to be carefully considered and clearly defined. At times, the national-regional tension may surface when the aims of national systems are inconsistent with the principles of regional higher education development. It is, however, important to manage these tensions premised on the conception that healthy and vibrant national higher education systems are required to build a regional higher education identity.

CONCLUSION AND CALL FOR ACTION

Despite entering the dialogue from divergent points of view, delegates nevertheless, through the process of dialogue, moved beyond the narrow confines of specific constituent interests, to finding common ground on key themes, and eventually to the proposed initiatives and insights.

The outcome of the dialogue process for delegates was an enhanced understanding of the possibilities that emerge when challenges and solutions are explored as a collective. The solidarity of institutions participating in dialogue found expression in the Cape Town Accord and Call to Action, the result of the dialogue. It captures the short, medium and long-term commitments made by delegates.

The Cape Town Accord and A Call for Action, 24 April 2010

We recognise that higher education in the Southern African region faces daunting challenges in rapidly changing global conditions, which need to be addressed through collective leadership on a regional basis if we are to realise the developmental benefits of higher education, not only on a national scale but also for broader regional development. It is in this context that the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) convened a special Leadership Dialogue Event with Vice-Chancellors from universities in Southern Africa on 24 April 2010 in Cape Town, to identify strategies to strengthen the higher education sector in the region, whilst responding to the needs of the higher education sector in Zimbabwe. The meeting was convened in response to a request by the Chair of the Zimbabwean Universities’ Vice-Chancellors Association for strategic assistance to stabilise Zimbabwean universities currently under threat as a result of efflux of highly qualified academics and professionals, weakened research and teaching infrastructure, lack of optimal Internet connectivity and access to development resources. SARUA’s facilitation of the meeting is in keeping with its strategic objectives of developing a regional identity for Southern African higher education and enhancing collaboration between universities in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

We reaffirm that governance and planning of higher education is a national responsibility and that the outcomes of the dialogue event are aimed at supporting the leadership of the higher education sector in Zimbabwe, to lead the process of rebuilding and revitalising the sector within the context of such national responsibility. The platform for dialogue provided by SARUA has created an opportunity for building solidarity in higher education in the region in support of Zimbabwean higher education.
We emphasise the significant regional contribution made by the higher education sector in Zimbabwe and firmly believe that any decline in its performance will weaken the higher education sector in the region. Zimbabwe accounts for the second highest student enrolment in the region and has the second highest absolute number of students studying through Open Distance Learning. After South Africa, the Zimbabwean higher education sector accounts for 18% of total student enrolment in science, engineering and technology; nearly a quarter of student enrolment in business management and law; and close to 20% of student enrolment in the humanities and social sciences. It is furthermore recognised that students and scholars from Zimbabwe have been of the highest academic calibre and provide a source of inspiration to many countries in the region.

The Zimbabwean Higher Education Challenge

We acknowledge that the Zimbabwean higher education sector faces significant challenges that threaten its very survival. The growth in demand for higher education products, performance and services has continued relentlessly, yet the resources to meet these needs have dramatically diminished under the impact of political and economic crises in that country in recent years. Institutions now operate in an environment that is characterised by grossly inadequate financial, material, human and other support resources. The exodus of senior academics in particular exerts an enormous constraint on the capacity of the system to reproduce itself. Physical facilities necessary to undertake quality teaching, learning and research are in short supply, and in many cases where such facilities are available it is run down and grossly inadequate. The continued growth in student numbers and the expected shift from providing access to higher education to providing quality education further exacerbates an already critical situation.

The Zimbabwean Higher Education Sector Priority Needs

We confirm our agreement with the priority needs of the sector as defined by the leadership in the Zimbabwean higher education system, which include:

- **Teaching and Learning** – There is a critical need for qualified academic and teaching staff. Human resource development and measures that will assist staff to become better qualified rank as the highest priority. Moreover, Zimbabwean universities require basic teaching and learning facilities and equipment, including better resourced libraries, computers and access to the Internet.

- **Research** – An increase in research funding is necessary to expand the rate of knowledge production and communication. The provision of mentoring through undertaking collaborative research activities is necessary to develop the skills of young researchers and scientists. The visibility of Zimbabwean research needs to increase through increased research funding, communication and publication.

- **Infrastructure** – Accommodating the growth in student numbers requires a significant expansion of existing teaching, laboratory, administrative and research infrastructure. Support needs to be given to the system to take advantage of current developments in broadband availability in South Africa, so that Zimbabwean universities can take full advantage of reliable and cheaper connectivity and ICTs in university management, teaching, learning and research.

- **Governance and Management** – The governance and management systems of the institutions in the sector have been adversely affected by a lack of funds and personnel. Staff turnover at senior management levels is high and these vacancies cannot be filled due to poor working conditions and a dearth of appropriately qualified skills.
Framework for Regional Collaborative Action

We propose undertaking collaborative activities aimed at rebuilding the Zimbabwean higher education system within a framework that calls on the following stakeholders to:

**Governments**
- **Affirm** the crucial role and impact of higher education in national reconstruction and development.
- **Remove legislative barriers** that constrain student and academic staff mobility, hinder the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for education, and lower customs duties on research and ICT equipment.
- **Create a conducive policy environment** in support of the SADC Protocol, the promotion of higher education collaboration, and an increasing focus on national and regional processes for qualification and quality assurance frameworks.
- **Prioritise national higher education development** for the establishment of effective national systems and institutions.
- **Provide specific funding to enhance collaboration efforts** in the form of incentives for regional collaboration, the funding of projects on problems endemic to the region and making specific funds available for student and staff exchanges.
- **Facilitate networking** aimed at building relationships with institutions, at initiating dialogues with other SADC governments regarding areas of potential collaboration, and at providing support for regional networks of excellence.

**Donors**
- **Prioritise regional initiatives in funding considerations** in view of promoting and funding collaborative activities and supporting the cost of collaboration processes.
- **Manage collaborative relationships** to ensure that collaboration works to the benefit of both partners.
- **Communicate with institutions** to ensure that projects are based on identified priorities of institutions and invite participation in co-operative endeavours.
- **Facilitate networking** through funding regional conferences and support networking opportunities that may lead to collaborative activities.
- **Share information** by sharing expertise, hosting information portals, documenting existing initiatives, exchanging research results and promoting good practice.
- **Providing technical support** and providing technology transfer opportunities.

**Institutions**
- **Promote, incentivise and reward collaborative activities.**
- **Manage collaboration relationships** in a manner that ensures mutual benefits for concerned parties.
- **Collect and maintain data on regional involvement** to understand the extent of these initiatives and their impact.
- **Ensure transparency** regarding qualification recognition for admission purposes and in regard to credit transfer possibilities.
- **Ensure sensitivity to cultural and language differences** through the provision of orientation and appropriate support.
• **Provide administrative support** that enables and facilitates collaborative projects, including support for post-doctoral work by candidates from the region.

**We take into account** the many lessons on collaboration shared at this meeting to inform and shape our actions in support of regional collaboration. We acknowledge that mutual reciprocity is fundamental to making co-operative action work and thus insist that mutual benefit become a core criterion that guides the development and implementation of collaborative projects.

**A Call for Action**

**We take cognisance** of the wide range of proposals discussed in response to the short, medium and long-term needs of the higher education sector in Zimbabwe. We highlight the following commitments made by Vice Chancellors:

**Short-term actions**

**We commit** ourselves to finding innovative ways, within the reach of individual institutions, of making academic staff available for short periods of time in Zimbabwean institutions. Many academics across the higher education sector in the region already have active and functional working relations with Zimbabwean colleagues, and such partnerships should be further elaborated, where practical, to expand and deepen collaborative support for higher education in Zimbabwe.

Factors such as existing workload, areas of expertise, and the practical and logistical requirements will obviously be taken into consideration in framing inter-institutional partnerships aimed at supporting the Zimbabwean higher education. The modalities and mechanisms for making staff available to Zimbabwean institutions may include, for example, secondments and staff exchange arrangements, and making staff available to serve as research supervisors. In the process we encourage institutions to take full advantage of ICTs for both synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning within and across borders. We recognise further that academics in the sector, especially Deans and Heads of Schools, may have additional ideas on support for their colleagues in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwean institutions will communicate their specific staff shortages to the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZCHE). The ZCHE will perform a co-ordinating role driven from the office of the Chairperson, and serve as the point of contact for institutions from the region offering assistance. The ZCHE will facilitate direct contact between Zimbabwean institutions and institutions from the region so that the nature and extent of support can be negotiated, given the specific resources available at institutions in a position to offer assistance. Vice Chancellors are encouraged to issue a communiqué that informs academics at their institutions of this request for assistance, and encourage them to assess if there are opportunities for providing support.

**Medium-term actions**

**We commit** our support for the appointment of a special representative to develop a detailed *Action Plan for Rebuilding the Zimbabwean Higher Education System*. Efforts to appoint the special representative will be co-ordinated by SARUA in partnership with the Zimbabwe Universities’ Vice Chancellors Association (ZUWCA) and the Zimbabwean Council for Higher Education. A Steering Committee convened by ZUWCA will be established to guide the work of the special representative and to ensure that the process of
formulating the Action Plan is led by the leadership of the Zimbabwean higher education sector. SARUA will develop a proposal under direction from the higher education leadership in Zimbabwe to raise the necessary funds to support and host the work of the special representative over the next six to nine months. The task of the special representative is to confirm the priority needs of the Zimbabwean higher education sector, formulate strategies in response to the identified needs, identify the implementation modalities and institutional arrangements, and craft a detailed action plan with budgets.

**Long-term actions**

*We commit* ourselves to using this period of transition as an opportunity for re-envisioning the Zimbabwean higher education sector and its contribution to higher education in SADC in the long term. We are mindful of the immediate character of the assistance required, but remain hopeful that the process of stabilising higher education in Zimbabwe will create strategic space for thinking through the long-term sustainability of the sector in that country.

**Conclusion**

*We are resolute in our conviction* that the crisis in higher education in Zimbabwe is a crisis in higher education in SADC. We are convinced that co-operation and partnerships among higher education institutions in the region and other stakeholders such as government, donors and the private sector is a *sine qua non* for addressing the crisis in Zimbabwe and the region.
REFERENCES


